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The Religious Basis of a Better World Order

An Application of Christian
Principles to World Affairs

By

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON, LITT. D., D. D.

*The Church of the Divine Paternity, New York.
Late of City Temple, London*



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To

HAROLD MARSHALL

*a dear fellow-worker, whose intrepid
Faith and brotherly Love are springs
of inward sustaining, I inscribe this
volume*



Foreword

THE sermons in this volume are selected, for the most part, from the last year of the City Temple ministry, and they will no doubt be found to reflect not only their English religious environment, but also the moods and problems of the period of reaction and irritation immediately following the war. No one will ever forget that time, with its fatigue, its seeming moral indifference, and its undertone of wistful yearning for spiritual reality; and it was a great privilege to stand in the pulpit of the Temple, at the cross-roads of the centuries, speaking of those truths which will abide when all the noises of the day have followed the feet that made them into silence.

The City Temple ministry, begun under the most ghastly conditions of the great war—when a preacher, announcing his text, was not sure of living to pronounce the benediction—was never meant to be permanent; but only a mission of Christian fellowship and good-will between our English-speaking peoples. To that ministry, not only in the Temple, but all over the British Isles,

I gave strength without stint—more, in truth, than I had to give—and I cannot say farewell to it without expressing my gratitude for the cordial reception everywhere accorded me in England, Scotland, and Wales, for the kindness and comradeship of my brethren in the ministry, both Anglican and Free, and, by no means least, for the noble loyalty of the people of the City Temple.

Looking out over the world to-day, so torn, so troubled, so gray with grief, everywhere the shadow of tragedy and the whisper of an unutterable sorrow for the gay and gallant dead, the echo of whose laughter leaves a hurt in our hearts, one recalls that prayer for Peace by an ancient Greek poet, which might have been written this morning; a prayer which only the spirit of One who was greater than the Greeks can ever answer:

*From the murmur and subtlety of suspicion
with which we vex one another, give us rest.
Make a new beginning, and mingle again the
kindred of the nations in the alchemy of Love,
and with some finer essence of forbearance
and forgiveness temper our mind.*

J. F. N.

New York.

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I

THE WORLD FIELD¹

"The field is the world."—MATT. 13:38.

TO-DAY we read the words of Jesus with new eyes, wondering not only at their depth and beauty, but at their sweep and grasp of thought; and as we begin to understand the message, we the better know the Messenger. Indeed, we needs must wonder that out of an environment of narrow nationalism and religious exclusiveness there should have come a Gospel of world-wide significance and perpetual importance. In manner and habit Jesus was a son of His age and land, but His mind moved outward toward the far horizons, and He thought and dreamed in terms of all humanity. His parables, so rich in local colour, have in them suggestions of the vast eras and great movements of history, like little ships following the trade winds of the world. Living in a tiny, turbulent province, He was not

¹This sermon, preached at the suggestion of a distinguished British statesman, has been printed in part and in many forms on both sides of the sea: it is here included by request, as a plea for a Christian enterprise equal to the task of world-rebuilding.

provincial in His faith, least of all in His vision of the love and power and purpose of God.

Truly He was led up into an exceeding high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world; but instead of bowing down to worship Satan, He dreamed a diviner dream whereby those kingdoms should become the Kingdom of God. Many great dreams have haunted the human mind—the ideal *Republic* of Plato, the Augustinian *City of God*, written when the Eternal City was reeling to its downfall, and modern Utopias not a few—but all of them are dwarfed by the mighty dream of the Kingdom of Heaven as it shone in the Mind of Jesus—

“They are but broken lights of Thee;
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

In nothing did Jesus more clearly reveal His divinity than in His vision of the unity and communal redemption of humanity here upon the earth as immediate, urgent, and inevitable. For that is what He means by the Kingdom of Heaven—nothing else or less—because it was given Him to see the human adventure “under the forms of eternity,” that is, He escaped the illusion of time and saw the long, tragic ages telescoped and brought together into one luminous vision, in which the meaning and purpose of the whole was

revealed. Here, surely, is the noblest conception that has come within sight of our groping human mind, and so far from being visionary it is the supreme necessity of our day, if we are to interpret, even dimly, the "increasing purpose" of God in this troubled time.

When we study the words of Jesus—fresh as the dew and bright with colour—we discover, first, that next to His faith in God and man was His faith in the practical efficacy of spiritual influences in human affairs. Like a wise physician, He put His hand on the root of all our ills when He said that to know God, to love God, to seek first the kingdom of God is the fundamental thing, and that all else will be added; and hence His chief mission was to reveal God to man and to bring man into harmony with God. Second, it is not an accident that Jesus makes the Child—the prophet of humanity, in whose hand the future lies—the symbol of His Gospel, and the child-heart the secret of His religion. Here the everlasting enterprise of education—by which we must mean spiritual nurture, no less than physical health and intellectual culture—finds sanction and inspiration; as much by the method of the Teacher as by His faith. Third, it is plain that Jesus regarded disease, with its entail of misery and mutilation, as an intruder in the world, and if we have lost the secret of His min-

istry of healing, no doubt it will be regained when we rediscover His "Gospel of the Kingdom" in its fullness and power,—as we must do if we would take the forward step into a higher order of life whither He seeks to lead us. Against these three foes—materialism, ignorance, and disease—the Captain of our Salvation arrayed His forces, finding in His faith in God the power, the resource, the heroism to overcome the world. Even as thus imperfectly outlined, the profound simplicity of His vast design is only equalled by the faith—nay, more, the experience—which made it a realized fact in His own life, and an impending reality for mankind.

Hitherto only a few have ever seen, even in dim dream, what Jesus actually came to do, and what His Gospel really means, and fewer still have believed it to be anything more than an iridescent ideal. To-day it is different: so much has happened, so many securities have been shattered, so many vaulting optimisms have been proved false, and our eyes have been washed by a flood of tears, the while we walked through the Gethsemane of world-war up to the very Mount of Calvary. Everywhere men are beginning to realize that Jesus was not merely dreaming a dream; as when Bernard Shaw tells us that he is no more a Christian than Pilate was, but that he is ready to admit,

after contemplating the world of human nature for nearly sixty years, that he can see no way out of the world's misery but "the way which could have been found by Christ's will if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman."

In other words, men are making the discovery—belated, but none the less significant—that what Jesus was talking about is a reality and a necessity; that He saw straight, and that only spiritual forces can hold the world together and redeem us from the red hell in which we lived for five years. Chesterton was right: "Christianity has not failed, it has been found difficult and laid aside"; but we now see that the Way of Jesus is less difficult than the way we have been going. When, at last, the Church attains to the vision of her Master, all provincial narrowness, all sectarian antipathy, all that mars fellowship and limits brotherhood will be melted in a spiritual passion; and she will realize her power as a keeper of holy mysteries, as an inspirer of personal righteousness and social justice—as the servant of the Kingdom of God.

Against this background let us now consider and interpret the meaning of our English-speaking civilization, and its significance for God and humanity, alike by virtue of our racial ideal and the form which Christianity has taken among us. Great events—which are the footsteps of God—

drew Britain and America together in a common task and responsibility, and the result is a new friendship, hastened by menace and cemented by sacrifice, which the future historian will reckon among the prophetic facts of our time. Certainly it is the most hopeful asset left to our humanity as it turns from the terrible business of destruction to the rebuilding of a devastated world threatened by an all-dissolving anarchy. Our history, our geographical positions, our temperaments, and still more our ideals, make us trustees of the liberties of mankind, and what we do will decide whether the civilization built up since the fall of Rome is to break up and go to pieces, or, unified, move forward to a new day. We stand at a grave and critical hour—how critical, none of us alive will ever realize—and if the English-speaking races should quarrel and become disunited, or fail to pool their thought and hope, and forget to keep the general welfare of mankind in view, the future will be such as to fill the stoutest heart with dismay. The words of John Galsworthy are none too strong:

“For the advance of civilization the solidarity of the English-speaking races is vital. Without it there is no bottom on which to build. . . . They have got to stand together, not in aggressive and jealous policies, but in defense and champion-

ship of the self-helpful, self-governing, 'live and let live' philosophy of life. . . . He that ever gives a thought to the life of man at large, to his miseries and disappointments, to the waste and cruelty of existence, will remember that if American or Briton fail himself, or fail the other, there can but be for both, and for all other peoples, a hideous slip, a swift and fearful fall into an abyss, whence all shall be to begin over again. We shall not fail—neither ourselves, nor each other. Our comradeship will endure."¹

Indeed, yes; and no petty matters, no divergence of material interest must mar a fellowship upon which the very existence of civilization depends, else the future will be haunted by insecurity, as the past has been. Not only so, but our common genius for private liberty and public order at home, of frankness, friendliness and fair dealing abroad, our ideal of the Commonwealth, of the service of man to his neighbour, near or far; the ideal which unites individual initiative with social responsibility—whereof this blessed island has been a home and a fortress for a thousand years, and whence it migrated to the New World—require of us a leadership of service in organizing and stabilizing the world. From this obligation there is no honourable escape, and if we are not

¹ *Yale Review*.

ready for a great feat of brotherly world service, putting the common good above our own interest, we shall prove ourselves unworthy of the leadership entrusted to us. For it is not an accident, but by the providence of God, that we are made the guardians of the main line of human development; and our confidence must be less in formal bonds than in our spiritual affinities and our common loyalty to the democratic ideal, which is at once the inheritance and the hope of our race.

After all, the reality underlying our deep, mysterious kinship "breaks through language and escapes"; it is more real than words, a thing of vision, of sentiment, of dream, living, growing, prophetic. It is not geography, though one of the longest frontiers in the world is between the Empire and the Republic—four thousand miles without a fort, without a gun, without a battleship; a line as invisible as it is unguarded. Nor is the tie between us race or language, much as these may have to do in making friendship not only real, but fruitful—and especially our great, rich, many-toned language in which Bunyan dreamed, and Carlyle thundered, and Lincoln uttered his simple and haunting eloquence. No, it is a common and high ideal of life, a common conception of civilization, of the home, of the Church and the State; we think in the same world of ideas and ideals, in a

solidarity of memory, of aspiration, of shared spiritual life, which finds expression in literature, art, and an advancing social order in which liberty and law are wedded. With the utmost respect for other races, we may yet truly say that our racial ideal, touched and glorified by the religion of Jesus, has produced a type of mind and character—from King Alfred to Gladstone, from Washington to Lincoln—which, in its contribution to the moral integrity of history, has none to surpass it.

Equally unique and noble is the form which Christianity has taken among us, interwoven, as it has been, with our common history, and touching to finer issues the creative forces of our civilization. One has only to think of the history of England—or of the American Republic—with the teaching of Jesus left out, remembering that the Bible was the loom on which our very language was woven, to realize the place of Christianity in the story of our race. With deep respect for the Christianity of other races—especially for Latin Christianity, many of whose saints are among our “shining ones,”—we may truly say that in insight and outlook, no less than in type of character and quality of service, something peculiar and precious has been wrought among us. Here again words fail us, refusing to describe what is more easily felt than defined; but no one will deny that our

history reveals a Christianity in which faith is joined with freedom, and noble thinking with practical mysticism. For example, in the *Letters of Bismarck* we read: "If I were not a Christian I would be a republican"; but we are wont to find the roots of our democracy, and the hope of its final consecration, in the teaching of Jesus about the love of God and the dignity and worth of man. Hence our religious responsibility for leadership in democracy, first, by removing its weaknesses and shams at home, and then by the Christian tutelage of races not yet ready for it.

True statesmanship consists in discerning the way God is going and in getting things out of His path. For that reason, the question for Christian patriots in our two nations to ask themselves, is, What does God mean by America, what is His purpose with respect to Britain, and how can we help to fulfil that purpose? Unless we see our national aspiration and enterprise as it stands in the service of the Kingdom of Heaven it will not yield its true meaning and prophecy, because there is no adequate vision of the Common Good by which to interpret it. By the same sign, our Christianity must pass from individual experience into social vision and public justice, and be felt in the halls of Parliament and Congress as well as in the churches, if we are ever to be Christian nations.

A nation of Christians is one thing; a Christian nation is another. Christianity, as we now see it, means more than a dogma, more than a ritual, more than a mystical ecstasy; it is a law, a principle, a spirit, which must be active in all the conditions of life, personal, economic, racial. The truth is that, while professing Christianity, we have been thinking in terms of materialism, and half-shares in Christianity will not work. If, then, we would realize our racial destiny, much less fulfil our religious obligation to mankind, it must be by leading the way in making trial of the Law of the Spirit of Jesus, not only as a private faith and expectation, but also as a social order and a national policy—a feat asking for a gallant and holy chivalry worthy of the new order of the ages.

First of all, there lies upon us the obligation—aye, the sheer necessity—of organizing the goodwill, the moral intelligence, and the practical wisdom of the world to defeat and destroy the horrible gods of militarism. When we listen to the Voice of the Dead, as it speaks to us in the poems, letters, diaries and memoirs of the trenches—a body of sacred writing which I commend to any one whose faith has grown dim—there is nothing of which it speaks more clearly, or with more unanimous emphasis and eloquence, than in its protest against the insanity and unrelieved brutality of war. All

through those letters we hear those two words, "Carry On," which sum up innumerable brief, blotted biographies, and they speak to us of comradeship, of solidarity, of coöperation, of a sequence of aim and ideal which make the last words of the dying the first command to the living. Their words, and still more their acts, unite in a message so authoritative, so compelling, that we dare not disregard it. We face a future knowing of it only this, that it is not ours but theirs, and our obligation to build it out of their ideals, and in their spirit of sacrifice, is inexorable, inescapable; else we shall fall under the curse of that flashing line of William Morris, who, as though foreseeing this day, wrote: "*For men betrayed are mighty, and great are the wrongfully dead.*" Society, said Burke, is a contract between the living, the dead, and those yet unborn, and we dare not break, or fail to fulfil, that primeval compact in which the law of each nation is but a clause, linking the visible with the invisible world in the unity of the Will of God.

Not alone to make an end of war must we learn to have joint aspirations, to act in concert, and to develop to its consummation the fraternal instinct; but also in our inter-racial relations now so acute. So long as distances were great and races lived far apart this friction was not so keenly felt, but to-day

the world has shrunk to the size of a neighbourhood and many peoples are mingled. Lord Morley thinks the problem of the black man in America "insoluble"—that is his word—and so it is, if Christianity be left out of it. As a welter of rancours and suspicions, as a wrangle of irritations, it is hopeless. Not less so the medley of races in the Republic, and only a practical Christian brotherliness can redeem us from an interminable feud ending in chaos. No doubt it is important to Americanize those who have come to us from other lands, but it is more important still to Christianize both ourselves and the strangers within our gates. Hardly less urgent is the problem of inter-racial fellowship in the British Commonwealth, under whose protection are some of the oldest and noblest races of humanity, and others just emerging from primitive life. If those races appeal to the magnets of Mammon as a field for investment,—and, alas, for exploitation—how much more should they touch the hearts of those who follow the banner of Jesus, the Son of Man! What human resources are there waiting to be trained for the highest service, if only we are equal to our opportunity of Christian tutelage and wise enough to let each race be free to unfold its best life, adding its gift to the Human Commonwealth!

Nor must we forget that the grand missionary

enterprise—the noblest and most prophetic undertaking now afoot on earth—will rest largely, if not entirely, in the hands and upon the hearts of our two nations in the days that lie ahead of us. Here is an opportunity, and with it a responsibility, asking us to make the religion of Jesus a reality at home and to send it into all the dark places of the world; a challenge alike to our human instincts and our Christian chivalry. What an appeal to the youth of Britain and America, offering a crusade no less poetic, and far more thrilling, than the causes which enlisted the valour of knights in the olden time! The thought behind this enterprise has enlarged with the processes of the centuries, but its motive of Divine love and human pity remains the same since a frail little man—following a voice heard in a vision—set sail from Asia Minor and began his heroic evangel in Europe. We still see, as Paul did, a host of many tribes and races—our brothers—groping in the dim twilight of fear, idolatry, and superstition, and every instinct of fellowship, every prompting of Christian love, compel us to teach them the noblest faith we know. Our methods, too, have altered, at the touch of a finer insight, a profounder sympathy, and an unfolding faith—altered from mere propaganda to interpretation, which seeks not to destroy but to fulfil—and in these labours in the world-field we

are learning anew the unity of our faith, a wider fellowship, and a clearer vision of the social meaning and practical efficacy of the religion of Christ both to ourselves and to our humanity in its slow, upward climb toward the star of happy light.

In tasks of such pith and moment, in enterprises so far-reaching and benign, Britain and America are called to lead our humanity, and thus to realize their highest unity and destiny in the service of that Kingdom to whose sovereignty all nations must yield at last. United in faith, in freedom, in obligation—as they were united in the trenches, on the gray solitudes of the sea, in the halls of a thousand hospitals, and in the consecration of an inexpressible sacrifice—they must pray together, plan together, dream together, sowing the living Word of God in the great world-field—trusting the Eternal Creative Good-Will to bring first the flower, and then the ripened fruit, in the far-off harvest of the ages.

The wind of God is blowing
Through the open minds of men,
And His sharp share is plowing
In the troubled hearts of men:
And soon there'll be a sowing,
And a springing and a growing,
And then a new grace flowing
Through all the lives of men.
For so shall come God's Harvest Home,
In the ripened souls of men.

II

THE THEOLOGY OF CIVILIZATION

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

—REV. 21: 1.

NEVER was there more need for a New Earth than in the age of Domitian, in which the prisoner of Patmos dreamed his dream. It was a hard and desperate age, when the world seemed swept clean of every footprint of Divinity. Might was in the saddle, and did what it liked, trampling out the ideals and aspirations of the spirit. There seemed no place in all the world safe for the gentler influences upon which the hope of humanity depends. The temple at Jerusalem was a shapeless wreck. One after another the Apostles of Christ had been put to death and their little churches scattered. Darkness seemed to settle upon the earth like a pall without hope of a dawn, except for one bright star which shone in the soul of a lonely seer on his island prison.

Despite the shadows, the Christian Apostle, an exile working in the quarries, saw the final inevitable victory of Christ. There was vouchsafed to

him a new certainty of God, a new assurance that His power is over all things; and his faith shone like a pulse of fire in the night. He beheld a new heaven of righteousness, and a new earth where men live together by the power of love. He saw the Lamb overcoming the Brute. He foresaw a new national life, symbolized in a far-shining City of God which no longer needed a temple in it, because it was all a Temple. As one also of our own poets has said,

Christianity completed is civilization.

The Book of Revelation is the Theology of Civilization, set forth in the symbols and imagery of apocalyptic vision; a prophetic theology written with a pen dipped in earthquake and eclipse, in the colours of heaven and the shadows of the bottomless pit.

Indeed, the whole Bible is a theology of civilization, in which we see the slow unfolding of the love and purpose of God in the courses of history. It moves between two mighty seers—Moses, whose vision brooded over “the old dark backward and abysm of time,” whence order and beauty emerged, and the author of the Apocalypse, whose insight forecast the final issue of man and his destiny. What a story it recites! It begins at the beginning, with the wandering of shepherds and way-

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farers in the morning of time. We see the rise of the home and the family, of the tribe and the nation; a race passing through slavery into the vestibule of civilized life; the gradual building of a rich and complex social order; its prosperity, its splendour, its testing time, and its final fall, "because it knew not the time of its visitation." No object lesson could be plainer, and if God speaks to us to-day, as He spoke to the people which were of old, through facts, forces, events, ideas, we cannot do better than turn again to the Book of Vision for light and leading.

After a long night of strife, bitterness, suffering, and horror, we see at last the red dawn of a new day. With the morning come new hopes, new plans, new expectations, new determinations, and whatever the new day may be, there is everywhere the feeling that

Nothing can be as it has been before;
Better, so call it, only not the same.

Whether the world will be better, or only different, will depend upon the mood, the spirit, the vision with which we set out to mould and control it. Evolution is not automatic. Society may easily suffer a devolution after the loss in blood and genius and treasure that it has experienced, giving way to passions of national vanity, commercial ac-

quisitiveness, and pessimistic cynicism. One thing, and only one, can save us from such a dire disaster, and that is a high, dauntless, undefeatable faith like that which thrills us in the words of the prisoner of Patmos. Literally, we shall be saved, if saved at all, by faith not only in the possibility, but in the practicability of organizing the good-will of the world and bringing it to the service of the common good. Even the prevention of a similar tragedy by purely repressive means will not be enough. There must be a new spirit, a heroic faith, by which the Will to Rivalry can be overcome by the Will to Fellowship, if we are to achieve the coöperation of peoples in a passion for a new and better world. Otherwise, after a lull, during which the nations will repair their fortunes and gather power, there will again be war. Hear these words:

“The task of the future demands the eradication of the sceptic attitude toward an unprecedented social and moral order. Nothing but the very essence of the religious spirit can achieve it. We must have an expectancy similar to that of the early Christians. We must learn to live with a sense of something immense impending, of a profound change to take place. It is only in an atmosphere of expectancy that we can work the alchemy of faith. It is impossible for any one to overestimate the importance of this psychic background. It is not enough that a few high-minded statesmen outline a plan of social and

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political reorganization. This is necessary. But all these plans and visions must ultimately depend for their realization upon a spiritual pressure coming out of the heart of the people, a universal energized religion, a will to creation."¹

Therefore the order of words in our text is not accidental; it is fundamental. Humanity has been trying to live without God, without faith, and it cannot be done. Human life is from above downward; our help is from God. Materialism, in the outworking of ideas and events, undermines civilization, and ends either in autocracy or anarchy, playing havoc with the human soul. There were many secondary causes of the Great War, but its primary cause was a materialized age and a faithless life. In nothing was the insight of the seer of Patmos clearer than when he saw that we must have a new heaven if we want a new earth. There must be a new vision of God, a new way of thinking of God, nay, a new *experience of God* in our hearts, and as a reality in the processes of life, if we expect a new world. Many things our age needs, but surely its supreme need is for a profounder, more satisfying vision of God, at once spiritually intelligible and philosophically competent, as a justification, an explanation, an inspiration, and a sanction of its noblest ideals and

¹ "Faith and the Coming Order," by C. R. Skinner.

undertakings. There must be a transformed spiritual outlook if we are to see the New Jerusalem descending—that is to say, a new heavenly life in which God dwells with men as a realized presence.

There is no need to say that our experience of God, our thought of what He is, determines, by its own logic, what we think about ourselves and our fellow-men, about life, and duty, and destiny. Thus the Bible is a revelation not only of what God is in His character, but of how the growing, enlarging thought of God modifies the spirit and character of man. If we study the theology of its civilization, we find that God was made known to man in personal experience, in social progress, and in the unfoldings of the cosmic order. It was a progressive revelation, as all revelation must be, wrought out in the toil, trial, and tragedy of human life, and later written down. First, God was thought of as tribal, local, exclusive, jealous. But as life deepened and man became more refined in spirit and larger in thought, his vision of God grew richer, deeper, broader. By the time we come to the great prophets, God is seen to be not only moral and spiritual, but universal in His love and care. No longer Israel alone, but Egypt and Assyria are dear to Him. At last, in the vision of Jesus He is the God and Father of humanity, not in contrast with man, as in the Old Testament, but akin to us,

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involved in our tragedy, working through us, seeking to reconcile all nations, and all souls, to Himself.

Here, then, is the answer to the question, What is the profounder vision of God that we need to-day, and how can we arrive at it? Manifestly, in the same way that the men which were of old attained to more fruitful and satisfying visions of God, whereof they have made record. Our faith is being revealed—that is, wrought out—as of old, in the experience of the age, its toil, its sorrow, its aspiration, its bloody strife, and its bitter need, and finds expression in its noblest lives, its loftiest thought, and its divinest ideals and endeavours.

Our thought-world is different from that of our fathers—we do not live in their “block-universe,” as James called it—but the God we love and seek is the same God to whom they prayed; the same, but differently interpreted. As our noblest minds think of God to-day, He is moral and spiritual indeed, just and loving, but also immanent, social, dynamic, living with us and within us, as well as above and beyond us, seeking to build “a Beloved Community.” He is all our fathers thought Him, and much more, much nearer, not less august but more our Comrade, slowly working out through us a benign purpose in history—His Holy Spirit a tide of moral influence running in

the hearts of men. He is the Eternal Creative Good-Will, who needs us for His service as we need Him for the fulfilment of our lives, and in the most literal sense we are His fellow-workers.

Of course, the implications of such an insight, both as to old ideas and new ideals, are as startling as they are inescapable. No wonder a deep silence has fallen upon many dogmas about which men were very talkative only a few years ago—because they are as dead as Pan. They are not refuted, but simply forgotten. They do not signify. Some of them, it is true, were survivals of times half-barbaric, and as such can have no place in a theology of civilization. What is more to the point is that we are arriving at an insight equal to the issue before us, which is the issue between an aristocratic, deterministic, nationalistic outlook and the ethics of democracy, of moral freedom, and of a fellowship of humanity.¹ "Wanted: a faith for a task!" cried a forward-looking saint recently fallen asleep; and it is a task the greatest ever undertaken by man—no other than the overthrow of autocracy in the State, in the Church, in industry, and the reorganization of society on a basis of justice and good-will. Such a faith our age demands, and it is being born of the agony and deep

¹ "The Experience of God in Modern Life," by E. W. Lyman.

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need of our day, evoking all the old reverences and inspiring all the new ideals; a "religion of the people," as Canon Barnett called it, and which he defined as "that faith in the Highest which is the impulse of human progress."

Always, and inevitably, a deeper experience of God involves and implies a nobler conception of humanity, and such a faith is needed to-day when we are tempted to the cynicism of disillusion. Never was it more fatally easy than now to say that human nature is human nature, and that we can expect nothing better of it than greed, revenge, and war—following the old vicious circle from Jena to Austerlitz, from Sedan to the Marne. Alas! the tragedy of this point of view is that it is true if we think it is true, and that so long as man believes himself to be basically brutal he will continue to exhibit his brutality. But if man is a being in whom God dwells, as Christianity affirms; if his soul is a shrine in which the Eternal Good-Will can make a home, then our highest social visions have hope of fulfilment. For we have not only a Divine Ally working with us and within us, but also a hidden ally, potential and prophetic, in every man, which Lincoln called the angel of our better nature, to which we do not appeal in vain. The war has shown us the nether side of humanity, but not less so its divine power of sacrifice and

endurance in behalf of the ideal, and for a future it does not see.

Faith, and yet again faith, is what our age demands; a faith adequate to the undertakings of these stupendous times. Not faith alone, but a clarity of thought, a wisdom of patience, and a daring of adventure to attempt great human enterprises. Slowly there is emerging in prophetic minds—more vividly outside the churches, it often seems, than inside—an experience of God equal to our needs; a vision which realizes alike the unity of humanity and the infinite value of every human soul. A noble man of state¹ has told us frankly that the essential thing in respect of a league of good-will among peoples “is to obtain recognition of the fact that the interests of humanity as a whole really exist,” and that nations are part of one another, even though it is right that each should aspire to its own ideal. Thus the Christian sense of sonship and solidarity, so effective in breaking down “every middle wall of partition” between nation and nation, class and class, is a practical necessity if we are to abolish war and translate into fact our ideal of organized good-will.

Edith Sichel spoke for a multitude no man can number when she said: “The immanence of God

¹ Lord Robert Cecil.

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and the life of Christ are my treasures.”¹ After all, it is to the vision of Jesus that we come in our quest of a theology of civilization, the vision of the sons of God working together with their Father, *by science, by social art, by creative love, by moral intelligence*, for the building of a brotherly world-order. Nor must we forget that there is in man what some one has called a Sixth Sense, a sense of the future, of a victory yet to be won over ape and tiger. They err who make the past of man the measure of what he is to be, imagining that, because a thing has been, it always must be. Man as yet is being made, and “prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining in the shade, till the peoples all are one.” The dreamers die, but never dies the dream that some day love will everywhere prevail. In God and godlike men we put our trust, God over all, in all, and through all, revealing His will in

Souls that have built our faith in man,
And lit the ages as they ran.
The company of souls supreme,
The conscripts of the mighty dream.
Brave souls that took the perilous trail
And felt the vision could not fail.

¹“Old and New.” Edited by A. C. Bradley.

III

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."—MATT. 4: 17.

NO one can read the Gospels and not see that Jesus was possessed by a great idea and a great purpose, and the two were fused into a glowing vision which led Him to the end. That idea, that vision, He called the Kingdom of Heaven, and by this alone, He said, mankind can be saved. The key-note was struck early in His ministry: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; and this ideal remained central and supreme in His thought and teaching. In sermons, in parables, in all the prodigal splendour of His incomparable speech, He was always trying to explain what He meant by it, trying to make it real and vivid. Sometimes He called it the Kingdom of God, sometimes the Kingdom of Heaven, but always, next to His faith in God, it was the sum of His teaching and the key to His Gospel.

What, then, did Jesus mean by the Kingdom of Heaven? It is plain that Jesus found it difficult to explain what He meant by it, though He laboured incessantly to do so. In parable after par-

able He spoke of it, telling us that it is here, at hand, inevitable, yet His imagery is confused by its very richness. Often it seems to exist independently of mankind; and yet it is within us. It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the greatest of all herbs—like the magic tent in the Arabian Nights, folded in a walnut shell, but when unfolded it covered the king, then the courtyard, and finally the whole city beneath its canopy. It is like a treasure hidden in a field, not something seen at once, but, when it is found, worth all that a man has. It is like leaven, which acts, slowly and surely, on the meal with which it is mixed, until the whole is leavened. And a thing that can be compared to a wheat field, a mustard seed, a yeast-cake, a hidden treasure, a pearl, and a fish-net, must have a complex and many-sided meaning.

Manifestly, Jesus meant something very wonderful by this majestic phrase, and if He could have put it more plainly He would have done so. Unfortunately, He nowhere formally defines it. There was no need to do so, because He spoke to people to whom it was familiar, and had been since the time of the prophet Daniel. They knew, in general, what He meant by it, however the current thought may have been lifted and transfigured in His vision. If we turn to the thought of the time

we find, first, that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be set up on earth, not in a far-off future life. Many of the Hebrews did not believe in life after death. Further, it was to be a universal kingdom on earth, all nations finally coming under its dominion. Also, it was to be a kingdom of righteousness, and the pictures of it become loftier and more idealistic the further we go, alike in the prophets and in the apocalyptists. There is no doubt as to what was meant by the Kingdom of Heaven at that time, and, therefore, no doubt as to what Jesus meant. By the Kingdom of Heaven He meant a universal kingdom upon this earth, in which the law of God should rule and mankind walk in love and in obedience to it. He meant not only the salvation of the individual, but the reign upon this earth of righteousness and love and blessedness for all.

Happily, at last, the splendour of the vision of Jesus, to which He gave His life, is beginning to dawn upon the minds of men. As never before, we can now take deep-sea soundings in the mind of Jesus in respect to the Kingdom of God. It is not only a vision, it is a history; the history of the universe, of this earth, and of its multitudinous life. There are, as Drummond said, "the inorganic, or first, kingdom; the organic, or second, kingdom; and the Kingdom of God, or the third

kingdom." The rule of God, of course, is supreme in all realms, and the laws of the lower kingdoms—mineral, animal, and the rest—are His laws. But He has higher aims than the making of stones, and trees, or human bodies, and this higher treasure Jesus urges. Man is physical, but not merely physical. When man attains to the spiritual, a new history begins. Jesus did not say, Seek *only* the Kingdom of Heaven, but seek it *first*. There are other than spiritual needs, but, He says, if we seek first things first, the rest will be added.

Thus it is a Kingdom of Heaven, not a kingdom in heaven—the term describes its temper, not its locality. It is spiritual, not geographical. It is world-wide, and age-lasting. It is the royal rule of God in the souls and in the affairs of men. It means not only noble persons, but a Divine Society, resting upon the fact that the universe has spiritual meanings, and is moving toward spiritual ends. It means the realization in human relations, both personal and communal, of the supremacy of spiritual realities, of the filial life toward God, and the brotherly life toward man, in which the promise of the future lies. Its foundation is righteousness. Its law is love. Its goal is nothing else or less than a redeemed humanity. It summed up the whole purpose and passion of the life of Jesus, the truths with which He lit up the minds of men, the power

which He poured into history, and His visions of the future. Before all else, before life itself, He sought the Kingdom of Heaven, and to it gave His life at last, walking the way of the Cross.

Truly it is a tremendous Credo, and for breadth and beauty and grandeur there is not another like it. The Family Kingdom of Plato was noble, but it was limited. The vision of Jesus embraced all races, all lands, all ages in its vast sweep. Slowly and swiftly, by a law of Surprise and a law of Growth, by Intervention and by Evolution, He saw the Eternal Will working toward the redemption of humanity. His faith in God was so creative, so vivid, that it made all that the prophets had dreamed, and righteous men had desired, instant, emergent, and inevitable. It is at hand, and because it has already begun His moral teaching is intended as the actual application of the laws of the Kingdom to life, both personal and social. His insight discerned in man, in all men, however far fallen, a Divine Life, often tiny as a mustard seed, which can and will grow to greatness by the power and grace of God. For, always, His vision of the Kingdom was linked in His faith with a mighty redeeming force, so real that to pass from its realization in Himself to its fulfilment in humanity was but a step.

Here in the teaching of Jesus—and here alone—

we have a faith and a vision equal, alike in nobility and comprehensiveness, to our human undertaking. What we need in our day, in every field of human aspiration and endeavour, is a clear, commanding conception of the Common Good; the insight to discern that the good of humanity as a whole actually exists, and that the good of any class, or sect, or nation can only be realized in the universal good. Indeed, if we are to have an ethic of fraternity we must learn "that goodness is not merely some form of similar activity of self and neighbour, but is really an attitude of each to the other; the realization, indeed, of spiritual kinship and unity,"¹—in short, that goodness is community, and that it takes two men and God to make a brother. In one of his poems William Morris speaks of the problems of our day as a "tangled wood," until they are seen in the light of life's meaning as a whole, and

"looking up, at last we see
The glimmer of the open light,
From o'er the place where we would be:
Then grow the very brambles bright."

Looking up, Jesus saw in clear vision the meaning of life, the goal of its uprising passion and desire, the purpose of the human encampment, to be the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven on

¹"Self and Neighbour," by E. W. Hirst.

earth; and thus He pointed the way out of the "tangled wood" in which we wander confused. The genius of His gospel was His faith in God the Father, and His extension of the idea of the family to include all humanity, its law brotherly love, its ideal a Beloved Community in loyalty to which human life, both personal and social, finds fruition and fulfilment.

This at least is plain: the Kingdom of Heaven was not a mere detail in the teaching of Jesus—a mere poetic gesture—but the essence and glory of His religion; and in the Golden Rule He found the principle of reciprocity by which it may be realized. How strange that a faith so central in the mind of Jesus, a vision that possessed Him so utterly, has so long been forgotten by the Church. If we turn to the creeds of the Church, in quest of essential Christian faith, we find almost no mention of the Kingdom of Heaven—as if what meant everything to Jesus has meant nothing to the Church. Indeed, the Church has actually changed the meaning of the word heaven, making it to mean, not an order of life in which the will of God fulfils itself, but a place outside this earth where the divine forces rule without hindrance. Hence an other-worldliness, not to be found in the Gospel of Jesus—hence, also, the blasphemy of asceticism with its blight upon the joy of life—and this in spite of the

great Prayer, in which He taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done *on earth*, as it is done in heaven." No wonder the brief, grand Prayer has become remote and unreal, if not a kind of incantation. Never have words been so misread; never has any teaching been so perverted. Jesus did not mean that God has given up the earth to misery and misrule, and that the only redemption of man is in a distant heaven beyond the grave.

Alas, the Church, as has been truly said, in its choice between the redemption of mankind and a private salvation, gave up the greater hope for the lesser. Hence its creeds, its ritual, all framed, it would seem, to exclude, not to include, as if it must always be trying to limit the limitless love of God, or build a hedge-fence about His grace. But the shock of world-tragedy has brought us to see more clearly, if not to think more deeply, and we now know that the hope of the Church lies in recovering the Faith of Jesus and entering into His largeness of vision. Hitherto, as a fact, the Church has not taught the religion of Jesus, but a religion about Jesus made up, in large part, of dogmas of which He said nothing, and rites of which He knew nothing. If it would recapture the power and joy of the early Church it must return to "the Gospel of the Kingdom," as Jesus preached it, with its wide outlook and its practical program. Until Chris-

tian principles begin to be applied to social, economic, and national affairs, it will be increasingly difficult to convert men to an "other-world" Christianity. As we may read in a striking essay in which a thoughtful man, writing hot out of his heart, has put the matter with a directness that may not be evaded:

"In two thousand years we have advanced at least to this point, that, if we have religion at all, we cannot believe in private salvation. We see that a man who could be content with his own private salvation, or with the very notion of a private salvation, would prove by his contentment that he was not saved. Salvation is seeing that the universe is good, and being a part of that goodness; and the universe is not good, it is nonsense, if some men are saved and others not. . . . Religion now means the hope of universal salvation, and that was what Christ offered to mankind."¹

Of course, by "universal salvation" is here meant the vision of the communal redemption of humanity, as it shone in the mind of Jesus; and if any proof of His divinity were needed, surely that sublime conception would crown Him as "the Lord of all Good Life." By the same token, the Church exists to promote the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven in the hearts and affairs of men, and for nothing else. It does not exist for

¹"What is the Kingdom of Heaven?" by A. Clutton Brock.

itself, but to get the work of the Kingdom done, to bring the rule of God into all the fellowships of human life. That is its business. The trouble is that the Church thinks too much about itself, whereas, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." In view of the discussion about rites, robes, orders, ordinations, and the like—about which Jesus said not one word—it is in order to say to the Church: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Such things are valuable only when they are "added" to something else. Jesus was not interested in churches; He was interested in men. He taught us to pray in words, and still more in our works, that His Kingdom of fraternal righteousness should triumph on earth, and in face of that task the little dogmas that make for debate are nothing. By all methods, by her evangelism, her spirituality, by the purity and brotherliness of her people—in her own life, in business, in the State, in industry—the Church must seek one thing and only one—to establish the Kingdom of Heaven.

Not only the Church, but all agencies and institutions making for the highest life have here their sanction and consecration. Indeed, the long climb of man out of the "old dark backward and abysm

of time" toward the light—slow, tragic, heroic, higher and higher out of savagery into civilization—begins to have meaning when we see its goal adumbrated in this august vision of the Kingdom of Heaven. The organization of life in homes, in industry, in education, in science, in art, in character, is touched with new and enduring worth when we see it as it stands in the service of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the same way, the fellowship of man in spiritual faith, in moral endeavour, in immortal hope, to which we give the name Religion, finds its fulfilment when it is devoted to the high end of making the will of God prevail. Our own lives, tiny as mustard seeds in the universe—so brief at their longest, so broken at their best—are redeemed from insignificance and endowed with epic worth and meaning when they are related to this large, eternal purpose. God is the meaning of life, and in His service our fleeting days that pass like hooded figures reveal their eternal quality. He only is wise who prays:

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine, so let the way
That leads to it be Thine.

Thus, "Thy kingdom come" is not a prayer for the rapture of heaven, but for the triumph of the spirit, the faith, the vision of Jesus on earth. The

social ills that afflict us exist because we have not yet obeyed—if, indeed, we have even learned—the laws of the Kingdom. As God writes His laws in nature, leaving man to find and apply them, so there is a Divine law of social justice awaiting discovery and application. The challenge of this quest is the pressure upon us of the Spirit of God, and in making trial of just ways God will reveal Himself in a new and more satisfying vision, as He was made known to the seers of the Bible in their long struggle as to how the Eternal shall be served, whether by dogma and ritual or by justice and righteousness. Indeed, the theme of the Old Testament is largely emancipation from economic slavery by the power of religious faith, as the theme of the New Testament is largely the reconciliation of racial and political differences through supreme devotion to a common Lord. During recent decades the wit of man, toiling in the physical realm, has opened to us a new experience of the reality and purpose of God in the lucid and wise order of the world. If, in the next few decades, a like inventiveness is devoted to enterprises of moral discovery and social engineering, no one can foretell what may thereby be gained in the way of a new revelation of God in the fellowship and service of man.

Ever the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; always

it is hovering over us, ready to reveal itself in the lives and labours of man when we are ready to receive it. What God seeks to do is not to drive but to lead—not to invade but to invite—and this requires men who have the insight to discern and the heroism to follow the will of the Eternal. At last the vision of Jesus will come true, as witness the profound harmony between His life and the increasing purpose of the universe, whereby, while empires crash and fall, He abides and advances in power and dominion over men. Slowly, and in the midst of strife and confusion, the City of Equity rises, a city built by the hand of man moved by the Spirit of God. God is the Lord of the to-morrows, as of the yesterdays, and by His grace we shall yet build that Kingdom of Truth, Beauty, and Justice, which our prophets have seen afar off in their visions, for which Jesus laboured, and for which He bids us labour and pray.

Keep heart, O Comrade! God may be delayed
By evil, but He suffers no defeat;
Even as a chance rock in an upland brook
May change a river's course; and yet no rock—
No, nor the baffling mountains of the world—
Can hold it from its destiny, the sea.
God is not foiled; the drift of the world Will
Is stronger than all wrong. Earth and her years,
Down joy's bright way, or sorrow's long road,
Are moving toward the purpose of the Skies.

IV.

THE RELIGION OF AMERICA¹

"He hath not dealt so with any nation."

—PSALM 147: 20.

RELIGION is a universal and elemental power in human life, and to limit its scope by restrictive adjectives would seem, at first sight, to be self-contradictory. For this reason, to speak of the religion of America borders on inconsistency. Since human life pulsates to the same great needs, the same great faiths, the same great hopes, why speak of the religion of one nation as if it were unique? Surely the religious sentiment is the supreme revelation of the essential unity of humanity, and the ultimate basis of human fraternity. Exactly, but the very fact that religion is the creative impulse of humanity promises variety of form, of accent, and of expression. It has

¹Preached at the celebration of Independence Day, City Temple, Thursday morning, July 4, 1918, attended by the Lord Mayor of London and representatives of many civic societies and religious communions.

the unity of a flower garden, in which there is one rich soil and one soft air, but every variety of colour and fragrance.

Humanity is one, religion is one; but in the economy of progress a distinctive mission is assigned to each great race, for the fulfilment of which it is held to account. Naturally, in the working out of that destiny the common impulse of race is given form, colour, and characteristic expression by the national, social, political, and intellectual environment in which it develops. Thus the religion of Greece, with its myriad gods, was different from the religion of Egypt, albeit springing from the same impulse. The Tree of Life has many branches, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations, its underlying unity taking many shapes of beauty and of power, and this richness of expression adds infinitely to its picturesqueness. Religions are many, but Religion is one, and those who know this truth look with a new wonder upon the various robes of faith and hope which man has worn in the midst of the years.

No one can read the story of man aright unless he sees that our human life has its inspiration in the primary fact of religion. The State, not less than the Church, science equally with theology, have their roots in this fundamental reality. At the centre of human life is the altar of faith and

prayer, and from it the arts and sciences spread out, fan-wise, along all the avenues of culture. The temples which crowned the hills of Athens were dreams come true in stone, but they were primarily tributes to the gods, the artistic genius finding its inspiration and motif in religious faith. Unless we lay firm hold of the truth of the essential religiousness of human life, we have no clue to its meaning and evolution. So, and only so, may any one ever hope to interpret the eager, aspiring, prophetic life of America, whose ruling ideas and consecrating ideals have their authority and appeal by virtue of an underlying conception of life and of the world.

For it is becoming increasingly manifest that our Republic—a melting-pot of nations and races—has a spirit of its own, unique, particular, and significant, and a mission to fulfil. Just as to the Greeks we owe art and philosophy, to the Hebrews the profoundest religion, to the Romans law and organization, and to Anglo-Saxons laws that were self-created from the sense of justice in the people, just so America has a distinct contribution to make to the wealth of human ideals. America is not an accident. It is not a fortuitous agglomeration of exiles and emigrants. Nor is it a mere experiment to test an abstract ideal of state. No, it is the natural development of a distinct life—an inward

life of visions, passions, and hopes embodying itself in outward laws, customs, institutions, ways of thinking and ways of doing things—a mighty spiritual fact which may well detain us to inquire into its meaning. Because America is carving a new image in the pantheon of history it behooves us to ask whether or not from its teeming, multitudinous life there is not emerging an interpretation of religion distinctively and characteristically American. In a passage of singular elevation, both of language and of thought, Hegel explains why he did not consider America in his "Philosophy of History," written in 1823:

"America is the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the world's history shall reveal itself. It is the land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of old Europe. It is for America to abandon the ground on which hitherto the history of the world has developed itself. What has taken place in the New World up to the present time is only an echo of the Old World—the expression of a foreign life, and as a land of the future, it has no interest for us here, for, as regards history, our concern must be with that which has been and that which is."

Written by a great thinker who studied the history of the world as an unfolding of the Divine life of man, and who searched every page for the footprints of God, those words are memorable. They

are a recognition of the unique and important mission of our Republic and its inescapable responsibility in the arena of universal history. Much has happened since Hegel wrote in 1823, and the drama of our national destiny, as so far unfolded since that time, is a fulfilment of his prophecy, showing that we have abandoned the ground on which history has hitherto wrought and developed not only a life of our own, growing out of a rich soil, but that we have undertaken a new adventure. To-day America is not a New England, not a new Europe, but a new world, and as such it must be reckoned with by all who would estimate the possessions of humanity. As one also of our own poets has said, setting our history to music: ¹

This is the New World's gospel: Be ye men!
Try well the legends of the children's time;
Ye are a chosen people, God has led
Your steps across the desert of the deep,
As now across the desert of the shore;
Mountains are cleft before you as the sea
Before the wandering tribes of Israel's sons;
Still onward rolls the thunderous caravan,
Its coming painted on the western sky,
A cloud by day, by night a pillar of flame.
Your prophets are a hundred to one
Of them of old who cried, "Thus saith the Lord";
They told of cities that should fall in heaps,

¹ O. W. Holmes.

But yours of mightier cities that shall rise
Where yet the lowly fishers spread their nets;
The tree of knowledge in your garden grows,
Not single, but at every humble door.

Long ago Carlyle said that the religion of a man is the chief fact concerning him, and the same is true of a nation. By religion he meant, as he went on to say, not the creed which a man professes; not that necessarily, often not that at all, since we see men of all degrees of worth and worthlessness professing all kinds of creeds. No, by religion he meant that which a man practically believes, lays to heart, acts upon, and therefore knows about this mysterious universe and his duty and destiny therein; that is the chief fact about him and creatively determines all the rest—that is his religion. By the same token, the religion of a nation is not its formal faith, its accepted theology, but something deeper, more real, and more wonderful; its ideals, its dreams, its temper, its ruling principles, its character. Socrates said that the real religion of Greece was not to be found in its temples, and Emerson made a like remark about the religion of England.¹ Our Yankee Plato found the actual religion of this island something finer, more inwrought, at once more noble and fruitful than the creeds of all its churches.

¹ "English Traits."

Much of the theology taught in America, even to-day, was transplanted to our shores from lands and times alien to our own, and, if taken literally, it would be incompatible with our fundamental ideal. It was the product of minds whose only ideal of the State was that of an absolute monarchy; it is a shadow of vanished empires, a reminiscence of ages when the serfdom of the people and the despotism of constituted authorities were established conditions. Its idea of God, of man, of salvation, are such as would naturally occur to the subjects of an autocracy, and this may be one reason why it hardly touches the actual life of men in our Republic. Fortunately, our fathers kept their theology and their politics apart, seemingly unaware of the conflict between them. No doubt here we find the reason why some of our most typical men, like Lincoln and John Hay, while profoundly religious, held aloof from the churches. If we would know the real theology of America, to say nothing of its religion, we must go further than to the creeds of its churches, and find it in the life of the people, their temper, spirit, and character. That is to say, we must find it in the Spirit of America.

What is the Spirit of America? There are those who tell us that we are a race of crude, sordid folk, sodden in materialism, and others who are equally

sure that we are a tribe of fantastic and incurable idealists. Both are right, and it is in this blend of a hearty, wholesome, robust materialism with a noble and skyey idealism that the real spirit of our Republic is to be found; and our glory is that we keep the two together. What idealism alone leads to and ends in, history has shown us many times—never more sadly than in Russia to-day. What materialism is, when it has conceived and brought forth its results, was shown us in the unimaginative, efficient barbarism of Germany. In America we hold the two together, that so our materialism shall incarnate our idealism, and our idealism consecrate and transfigure our materialism. Because this is so, because our national spirit has this dual aspect, it is a blunder to leave either element out of account in the interpretation of our history. Historians are apt to emphasize the purely material causes of our national growth, interpreting it as a matter of chance, of geographical environment, or, as is now the fashion, of economic necessity. Thus we find the grand traits of New England character attributed to harsh climate, sterile soil, and hostile conditions, and the Revolution and the Anti-Slavery movement explained as primarily economic in motive. It is not true. While no one denies the influence of climate and industry, it is little short of blasphemy to overlook those deeper

causes—those glowing sentiments that have fired the hearts of our people. America is a land of commercial opportunity, but our hearts are not in our ledgers, and our aspirations are not expressed in profits. What really rules our nation is a passionate attachment to the ideals of liberty, justice, and fraternity; and the soul of our people finds voice, not in records of bank clearings, but in the far-flung visions of our national poets and prophets.

Stephen Graham, having followed the Russian pilgrims to the Holy City, went with the poor emigrants to America, and he tells us that it was a journey from the most mystical of all lands to the most materialistic. And yet, if we take Tolstoy as the typical man of Russia, of its strength and its weakness, its lights and shadows, and place him alongside Lincoln, the most typical man of America, who will say that America is not also a land of mysticism? Indeed, when Lincoln fell more than fifty years ago, it was Tolstoy who said: "He was a Christ in miniature." To say that America is idealistic is only another way of saying that it is intensely religious; that our national life is rooted in spiritual reality; and this profound religiousness has touched our history to finer issues, turning an almanac of prices into an Epic of Humanity—nay, into a chapter in the Biography of God. Consider

now the religious meaning of the fundamental ideas and aspirations of American life, and it will become clear what our real religion is.

Before there was ever an American Republic, thinkers in other lands had wrought out the gospel of liberty, equality and fraternity as a thesis; but our fathers proceeded from theory to practice. Holding that government must be by the people and for the people, they laid the foundations of a nation dedicated to the truth that all men are created equal—equal before God, before the law, and in their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, each having inalienable rights which no State can confer or deny—trusting the free man to guard his freedom and to find in his freedom the solution of whatever problems may arise. That is to say, they reversed the theological teaching of ages and risked the fate of a nation on faith in the essential goodness of human nature and its kinship with God! Surely he is blind who does not see how radical is the religious meaning of this first principle of our American theology. America is a symbol of confidence in human nature; it assumes the inherent divinity and sacredness of man, and our history has justified that faith.

Since ours is a government of the people by the people, the hideous dogma of the State as an abstract entity, a collective fiction, leading a life of

its own, above and beyond the lives of the men who compose it; the frightful dogma which makes the State a kind of mortal god who can do no wrong, an irresponsible Moloch whose necessity is law, and to which liberty and right are to be sacrificed—that dogma has no place in America. Thank God we know nothing of the atheism that the State must do what it has to do, law or no law, right or no right, and that ends justify any means, no matter how infernal! Once a French King said: “I am the State”; and that is what every citizen of our Republic can say. We are the State, and if the nation is guilty of a crime, each of us is guilty, in his degree, of that crime. America, by its very faith, repudiates the infamy of Machiavelli, Bismarck, and their ilk, holding the moral law to be as binding upon a State as upon a man. In other words, our fathers, who were your sons, took God into account and had respect for His eternal moral order when they founded our Republic, basing it, as they did, upon a religious conception of life and the world.

Always a new faith in man implies and involves a new vision of God. It was natural for the men who bowed low when the chariot of Cæsar swept by to think of God as an infinite Emperor, ruling the world with an arbitrary and irresponsible almightiness. But for men who live in a Republic

such a conception is a caricature. The citizens of a free land do not believe that God is an infinite autocrat, nor do they bow down to a divine despotism. No, they worship in the presence of an Eternal Father, who is always and everywhere accessible to the humblest man who lifts his heart in prayer. The logic of the American idea leads to faith in a Divine Love universal and impartial, all-encompassing and everlasting. Elisha Mulford was in accord with the theology of his country when he entitled his noble book "The Republic of God," and it is no wonder that he would fain open the gates of Heaven a little wider than they have ever been. Also, if the faith of the religion of democracy is the Fatherhood of God, its practice is the Brotherhood of Man.

America admits men of all nations and races into her national fraternity, granting them the right of equal suffrage and citizenship. They walk with us along our avenues of trade; they sit with us in our halls of legislation; they worship with us in our temples. Americans all, each race brings some rich gift of enterprise, idealism, and tradition, and all are loyal to our genius of liberty under wise and just laws. Most of us could repeat with slight variations the words of John Hay when he described the mingling of many bloods in his veins: "When I look to the springs from which my blood

descends, the first ancestors I ever heard of were a Scotchman who was half-English and a German woman who was half-French. Of my more immediate progenitors, my mother was from New England and my father from the South. In this bewilderment of origin and experience, I can only put on an aspect of deep humility and confess that I am nothing but an American." America knows nothing of the Slavic race, nothing of the Teutonic race, nothing of the Saxon race, but only the Human race, one in origin and destiny, as it must be one in a great fellowship of sympathy and service.

Such is the ideal and prophecy of America, and if to realize it all at once is denied us, surely it means much to see it, found a great nation upon it, and seek practically to realize it. Lord Bryce said that American patriotism is itself a religion; it is one with the spirit of all true religion, since the spirit of fraternity is the essence of both. After this manner the religious spirit works itself out in our Republic, coloured by the political conditions under which our nation has grown—a faith profound and fruitful, hearty, happy, facing the future with the soul of adventure, often shadowed but never eclipsed, sometimes delayed but never defeated. If it is revolutionary, it is also redeeming, offering to every man the right to seek that truth by which no man was ever injured, and to look up

from the lap of Mother Earth into the face of God the Father. In the hymn of John Hay it is sung:

Not in dumb resignation
We lift our hands on high ;
Not like the nerveless fatalist,
Content to trust and die.

Our faith springs like the eagle,
Who soars to meet the sun,
And cries exulting unto Thee,
O Lord, Thy will be done.

Thy will ! It bids the weak be strong,
It bids the strong be just ;
No lip to fawn, no hand to beg,
No brow to seek the dust.

Wherever man oppresses man
Beneath Thy liberal sun,
O Lord, be there, Thine arm made bare,
Thy righteous will be done.

V

THE CHRIST OF TO-DAY

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations; . . . and lo, I am with you alway."—MATT. 28: 19, 20.

"Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst."—JOHN 20: 26.

SINCE these words were written many generations of men have lived and wrought and passed away—poor players all, great and small alike, that strutted and fretted their hours upon the stage and then were seen no more. The things they were busy about, and deemed, it may be, of great and lasting importance, are forgotten now along with them. Dust hath returned to dust. Yet we are gathered here to-day, in this far-off age and land, in the name of Jesus—our presence a visible witness of the truth of the first text, and the object of our coming set forth in the second. It is indeed wonderful if one thinks about it in all its meanings and suggestions.

More wonderful still is the fact that we do not seek a mere figure in history, but a living Christ who is the personal concern of every one of us. For it is He who brings us here from our homes

and our places of labour—He, and nothing else. Hither we foregather seeking One who hath power to teach us the truth, to lighten our burdens, and to give peace to our hearts. Such is the perpetual and manifold ministry of Christ to the soul of man, and it is the greatest fact in history. For it is not merely a theory, nor yet a faith, but a fact that Christ is with us both as an influence “in diffusion ever more intense,” and as a Presence to comfort and command. No other, not even the greatest of the sons of men, has anything resembling His persistent and redeeming power among men. It is not merely that something in the example of Jesus or in His teaching holds our attention, but that He Himself is with us, seeking to make our lives God-illuminated and love-anointed.

Compared with what Christ has meant, and still means, to humanity, His brief life in the flesh long ago was as a single chord to a vast melody. No one can trace all His footsteps, much less follow in what ways He has wrought upon the spirit of the race, refining it and seeking to make beauty and pity prevail. Only the art of an angel could write such a history. The larger life of Jesus is continuous with history; and if any one asks how we know it is so to-day, the answer is because He haunts us, because we cannot get away from Him, because we feel Him, know Him, and have fellow-

ship with Him. Throughout the ages since He lived He has been the better Angel of our human nature, and for millions to-day He is not simply "the realized ideal of humanity," but the only God there is. When in the secret place of their souls they try to think about God and wonder what He is, lo! it is a form like unto the Son of Man that they see in their dreams. So far as they can form any idea of God, it is Jesus infinitely enlarged in every way. Such love is not given to a mere ideal, nor to an historic figure, nor yet to a person living but remote. The only possible object and explanation of the devotion of Christian history is a Person real, living, and near.

If we ask for the reason for this experience it is not far to seek. The Infinite, as such, is not enough for the highest spiritual life of man. Or rather it is too much, too vague, too vast, too formless. Humanity must have some fixed, visible point, some focus, so to put it, of the Eternal about which its love and reverence may gather. The Infinite, to be Infinite, must contain more than power, more than knowledge; it must also contain truth, love, purity, justice, joy. But these, to be of any effect in our human world, must be personal. The vague, formless, voiceless Infinite must take shape, as the limitless sky must yield its cloud. In the life of Christ—in His character and personality—

the Eternal did take lovely and revealing shape, "full of grace and truth," and that is why the faiths, hopes, dreams and reverences of humanity are entwined about Him. He makes God real, personal and eloquent to men, and when that vision is before us we know, if only for a brief time, that at the heart of things there is an infinite pity, a benign purpose and a deathless hope.

Never was the ministry of Christ more needed than it is to-day, when all things tend, with a paralyzing emphasis, toward the impersonal. Surely the personality of Christ, so persistent in history and so creative in experience, is worthy of the attention of a scientific age which deals with realities. Such a power, such a possibility, such a prophecy must have been embodied in nature from the beginning; and this suggestion, if read aright, is a way of approach to Christ as the fact of supernal significance in nature, as He is the fact of supreme import in history. Ages differ in outlook and endeavour, but hitherto each age has found in Christ that which answered its questions and satisfied its profoundest needs. Adown the centuries we see the pilgrim Christ moving in new and changed times and amid vast, unexpected developments of thought and life. There is no reason to think that our age will be an exception; but the angle of view, which gives us our vision,

has changed, and Christ must be reinterpreted if we are to find in Him the resource equal to the aspirations and enterprises of this stupendous time. No longer can we be content with the Christ of the past while humanity is calling for a Christ of to-day, girded with power to meet its wide-ranging issues and demands. As a wise teacher has said:

“ Perhaps it may be reserved for the coming age to combine anew in a nobler whole all that the scholarship of a hundred years has done to make the Jesus of history actual again with that most heart-shaking and world-changing conviction of the early ages, that here we have the absolute and final manifestation of the Eternal God, that these human lineaments of the Man of Nazareth are the letters and syllables of the Eternal Word. Then the days the world will sorely need, the great days of faith, will return, for ‘ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?’ ”¹

If there is one thing that our troubled age needs to-day it is a heart-shaking and world-changing conviction, such as that which grasped the crumbling classic world and reshaped it. Speaking of that long-vanished world, Mommsen said on the closing page of his “ History ”: “ The world was growing old, and not even Cæsar could make it young again.” Yet what Cæsar was unable to do, Christ did. Into an age spiritually sad, morally

¹“ The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith,” by D. S. Cairns.

decaying and utterly weary—an age, if not hopeless, at least unhopeful—He made His advent, bringing new life, new ideas, new influences, new expectations, and quickening the human soul in a new fashion. It was like the coming of spring after a long winter, like the dawn after a dark night. One has only to turn from the writings of the Stoics to the little Book that tells the story of Jesus, to realize what a difference He made. In one there is a noble endurance; in the other an endurance equally noble, but also an energy of hope, a warmth of love, a serenity of faith, and withal a victorious joy hardly known on earth before Jesus lodged with the fishermen by the sea.

Surely here is a creative force of faith, and “a deep power of joy,” which we need in a world shattered by war and threatened by chaos. There must be a synthesis of insight and experience, a renewal of the spiritual forces of civilization, if we are not to fall into

That sad, obscure, anarchic state
When God unmakes but to remake the world
He else made in vain, which must not be.

Slowly it is dawning upon us that the world of men can be, and of right ought to be, a community, in which democracy and religion are two aspects of one and the same life. But the world com-

munity must include God, since every impulse toward it is of His Spirit. Without Him, however gregarious men may be, however bound to one another by economic interest, they yet live in an alien place. With Him, the world of men and things acquires full social character and value. In short, if we are to have an organized world we must have a world-soul, some inner unity that shall do for mankind at large what class feeling does for a class, and what patriotism does for a nation. Such a unity must be found in something real and abiding, rooted in habits and sentiments as well as in reason—that is to say, in religion. As we may read:

“To reveal God aright and to fulfil its function in human life, religion must become more moral and more democratic. The world-community can believe in no merely tribal or national God, with favourite children whose battles He fights, whose ambitions He coddles and to whom alone He grants glimpses of His will; nor in a merely sovereign, autocratic God, who exploits men without feeling for their misery or regard for their desire; nor in an imperturable God whose chief virtue is His changelessness. The supreme bond of the world-community will be a God of right and justice, who owns all men as His children and who steadfastly seeks with them, and through them, the common good.”¹

¹ From a Declaration of Principles of the Religious Education Association of America.

Nothing less than the God revealed in Christ is equal to a need so insistent, so profound, and so pathetic. Only in Christ—in His Spirit, His principles, His personality, and, above all, in His vision of God—may we ever hope to find the truth, the tie, the spirit by which the world can be unified and held together by a bond stronger than force or even law. If Christ is “the same yesterday, and forever,” He can evoke in mankind that sentiment of spiritual solidarity, that sense of kinship, comradeship and service without which all our outward forms of organizations—our “machinery of friendship”—will be fragile, if not futile. But to make that ministry possible we must rediscover Christ in our thought, our experience, our obedience, and, like Augustine of Canterbury, take a whole Christ for our salvation, a whole Bible for our staff, a whole Church for our fellowship, and a whole world for our parish. Exclusiveness must be excluded; no partial thought, no limited vision will do. Henceforth we must think in terms of all humanity, and in the assurance that what Christ does and has done for individuals, to which experience past and present bears shining witness, He can and will do for society as a whole—that is, help the world to find its soul.

First, as to our thought of Christ—for we must

think, as well as act, if our efforts are to be intelligent and fruitful. For years past, in response to a deep need and amidst many agitations, a more comprehensive and satisfying thought of Christ has been taking form. It has been enriched of late by the new study of the Jesus of history, by the more vivid social passion of our day, and by the revival of a new mysticism free from the perils that beset the old—a mysticism not only individual but social, not only contemplative but active. To-day we may say that our thought of Christ is neither orthodox nor unitarian, neither liberal nor evangelical; it is all these—and more! Slowly we are coming to a conception, a vision, an *experience of Christ* in which the partial ideas of the past are gathered up and fused into a larger whole, rendering old debates obsolete. If the harmony has not always been kept between history and experience, it is better adjusted to-day than a few years ago, when it seemed that Jesus as a Reformer was supreme. But time is teaching us that the reality of Christ is too large, too rich, too varied for any one mind, any one sect, or any one program to reveal, and that we must know Him in fellowship.

Seeking the Christ of to-day, we find ourselves going back—or rather forward—into the atmosphere and colour of the New Testament. The vivid realism of the first three Gospels—etching

the real Jesus in the air and setting of His age, as His disciples knew Him—the personal idealism of the Fourth Gospel, with its deep insights and intimacies, unite in our thought and faith with the glowing mysticism and cosmic universalism of St. Paul. Above all, and through all, we are learning with St. Paul to read the dark, cryptic story of life upon the earth as a threefold drama of revelation, in nature, in history, in redemption, and to find in Christ—in His life, His Spirit, His poignant and creative compassion—the key and clue to it, revealing all that we know, or need to know, of the Father of man. And the vision of God in Christ—the over-brooding, indwelling, suffering, redeeming God of the Gospel—so far from being obscured by the awful apocalypse of the war, has been made more real, alike in personal experience and in social aspiration; so that, in the Christ of to-day men do know, as of old, the living God in His eternal good-will.

Second, as to obeying Christ, the necessity of it is as vivid as its difficulty—and that means much. How difficult it is each of us can testify, and it is no wonder that men hold that principles like those of Jesus, which are so fundamental that they become the guiding stars of all ages, cannot literally be obeyed this side of heaven. Still, if Christian ethic cannot all at once be a fulfilment of the ideal,

it can and must be an honest, earnest, tireless effort to adjust human life, in all its relations, to the ideals of Christ. By the same token, it must advance with ever-widening horizons and ever-deepening intensities as men pragmatically work out what they know of His ideals. For never has it been more clearly seen that the laws of Jesus are like the great laws of nature, and that there can be no real peace, no security, no happiness until they are applied to personal life, to industry, to education, to the Church, and to the larger relations of nation to nation. This at least is plain: apart from Christ there is no hope at all that the dreams of those who are struggling for a better social order, for justice, sympathy and beauty, will be fulfilled.

The religion of Jesus is love, comradeship, fellowship, in which men live together as the sons of God in mutual service and good-will. But when a man of to-day tries to put that spirit into social practice, he finds himself in an order and habit of life created by and intended to serve a very different spirit. There is the difficulty, and it is idle to say that it is not real and formidable. None the less, we must accept the challenge of it, demonstrating a more excellent way. If the world is to become Christian in any real sense, the will to fellowship must prevail over the will to rivalry,

and that, too, without losing what is useful and noble in the spirit of rivalry. It is a stupendous task. It will take time and patience and wisdom and heroic sacrifice, but it can be done. Faith may often be tempted to cynicism before the end is in sight, and the love of many will wax cold, but we must never allow ourselves to doubt the issue. The alternative is appalling. Two ways are set before us, either we must follow Christ or turn away from Him. Both ways are difficult, but one is hopeless, and we dare not follow it, unless we are willing to resign ourselves to endless feud, faction and strife, and live under the shadow of chaos.

Here, then, is the fair challenge of a sad and distracted age to the followers of the Christ of to-day. Are we ready to meet it? If we are not to fail, the Church must be the home of good-will, the centre of unity, the fountain of fellowship, making actual in the spirit and form of her life the reality of her initial faith in the essential unity of all men under God. At least, we must have one place where the will to fellowship can have a chance to grow and be glorified, if it is to influence the structure of the social order. Is Christ divided? Wherefore, then, our sectarianism, our intolerance, and our spiritual snobbishness? In the long run, as Donald Hankey said, the failure of the Church is a failure of love, a failure of fellowship. If it

is impossible for men to be united in the fellowship of Christ, then Christianity is impracticable, and had better be given up. But it will not be given up. Christ will yet have His way. If the Church is untrue to the ideal of her Master, the candlestick will be removed from her altar and the light will shine elsewhere. Sooner or later some group will realize the will to fellowship and draw to itself those who are worthy to be called the disciples of Christ.

Such a Leader, Teacher and Saviour is the Christ of to-day, and each of us may find in Him our faith for to-day and our hope for the morrow, our cleansing from sin and our comfort in sorrow. Whatever else may be dim, here is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Other voices may be uncertain, but our own hearts tell us that by as much as we trust Him and obey Him, by so much do we really learn the worth and meaning of our days. It means much to know the road and the direction; but it means more to know that, while others vanish from our side, there is One who is going all the way, even through the Valley of the Shadow:

And without a screen at last is seen
The Presence in which I have always been.

VI

THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH¹

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."—REV. 2:7.

THE Book of Revelation is the Gospel of that Unfinished Life which slowly shapes the world, a vision not of the past, but of the Eternal Present in which the Living Christ is fighting His way to victory in the awful courses of history. Its spirit is immediate, instant, urgent, as if the veil were suddenly lifted and we perceived the forces moving behind events and the spiritual conflict impending. Here is revealed the Christ not only of the four Gospels, but of the four corners of the earth; the Christ of to-day, not awaited as a portent in the heavens, but a living Presence with eyes of flame, His voice as the sound of many waters, unveiled anew in the stupendous overturnings of history. It is the Eternal Christ,

¹ Preached at Glasgow, as fraternal delegate from the Congregational Union of England and Wales to the Scottish Union, May 6, 1919.

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“ no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in All,
King of Kings, Lord of Lords,
As His servant John received the words,
‘ I died and live for evermore! ’ ”

No one can read without a quick throb of the heart the opening vision of the flaming Christ judging the seven churches of Asia, while the text recurs again and again as a refrain. The Redeemer-Judge commends each one of the Churches for its faith, its patience, its fortitude, and its charity, but in each He finds something lacking. One is too rich, another has fallen into error, another is lukewarm, and still another has a name to live but is dead. The order is first praise, then rebuke, and finally a call to repentance, else the candlestick will be removed. To-day, to-morrow, forever, that judgment goes on, since the Church must renew its life and revise its method continually in response to the living Word of God spoken in the facts, forces, ideas, and events of each new age. In the nature of things it must be so, because the religion of Jesus is a life, a spirit, an inspiration, and as such is not to be fixed in any form of dogma or rite or custom or method, but will forever be breaking into human life with new and revolutionary power.

Long ago Schiller said that "the history of the world is the judgment of the world," and the phrase flashed out in the volcanic days through which we have been living. It is equally true of the Church, and doubly so in a day of the right hand of God when all human things are tried as by fire. Yesterday was a testing time, as to-day and to-morrow will be. The Church was not found wholly wanting in the infinite anguish of yesterday, nor will it utterly fail in the bewildering perplexity of to-day. It is permitted us to believe that the Saviour-Judge sees something to praise in His sorely tried Churches in this strange time, but He finds much—oh! how much—to rebuke. Again, as in days of old, comes the call to repentance, lest the candlestick be withdrawn. Only a humble and penitent Church may inherit the world now in the making; only a holy and heroic Church can be the Body of Christ to a day like this. With abject humility the Church must confess the sins of the past, its lack of adventurous faith, its narrowness of vision and of sympathy, its bigoted divisions—all, indeed, that mars fellowship, destroys brotherhood, or limits the personal and social realization of the mighty power of the Gospel.

For what is the Church, and what is its mission and service to the troubled world of to-day? It is one of three old, divine institutions by which the

higher life of man is nourished, the other two being the Family and the State. All three are sacred, all three are religious—citizenship as much a sacrament as prayer—and not the Church alone. If any one of the three is to be selected as more religious and of diviner sanction than the rest, it must be the family. It came first, and it satisfies more human needs than any other, if, indeed, the other two may not be said to be extensions of its idea and influence—as Jesus taught concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. Not unnaturally, the three primary institutions are often confused, not only because all are alike religious, and because the same man is in all three, but because each glides into the other and their functions are interwoven. None the less, they are distinct, and if we say that the Family is the home of the affections and the State is the institute of common rights, the Church is the home of the soul—the fellowship of faith and service, of vision and hope. Once we have defined the genius of the Church and its function in the life of man, we begin to see how much of the criticism aimed at it is wide of the mark, failing to see its sovereign function as a witness to spiritual reality, a fountain of moral life, and a teacher of that truth which makes all other truth true.

Such is the institution, as old as the race, to which Jesus Himself belonged, in which He lived

and wrought, to which, dying, He gave His name, in which He still lives to perpetuate His incarnation, and to which He entrusted His gospel of redemption. The Church, then, is a fellowship, and the sorest need of a world torn by war, grown grey with grief, and trembling on the edge of chaos, is the fellowship of humanity in God and of the life of God in humanity; a fellowship of souls, of families, of classes, of nations, of races—free, reverent, inclusive, prophetic—in which the vision of God in Christ is the key to the meaning of the world, making Fatherhood the supreme fact in our faith and thinking and Brotherhood the ruling spirit and law of life. To-day, as always, the first and chief mission of the Church—at once its opportunity and its obligation—is to reveal God the Father to humanity; to hold up the Christian ideal by which progress should be guided and judged; to test institutions and programs by their approach to the mind of Christ; and to inspire all whom it can reach with resolution to do and be the things that are necessary to make the Spirit of Jesus prevail in all the relations of mankind.

What of the Church of to-day? One thing is plain: to make the victorious Church of To-morrow out of the divided, ineffective Churches of to-day we need not only reorganization, but regeneration; not so much ecclesiastical mechanics as

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spiritual dynamics. Manifestly, a united world requires a united Church, but it must be a Church renewed and empowered; a Church of the open mind, the fervent heart, and the prophetic voice. If one Church has lost its spiritual vitality, it is not clear that it will regain it by union with another Church equally dead. The redemption of the Church is not by reunion, which may be of little meaning—the less so if it is to be a mere agglomeration in which historic loyalties and varieties of witness are erased in a blur of ambiguity—but by a renewal of its spiritual life and power. If we are to apply Christianity to social questions, as we talk so much of doing, there will be little result unless it has more power than it has now. The primary thing is not to get more people to profess dogmas and observe rites—useful as these may be—but to send forth into the world more men and women filled with the spirit of Jesus. For, when all is said about economic law, the future of the world will be according to the character of its citizens, and the greatest power for the making of character is Christ. There are rich endowments of character stored up in men everywhere that are never dreamed of until discovered and released by contact with Christ. This is the opportunity of the Church, and here its responsibility lies. Its work is to bring men to look upon life as Jesus

looked upon it—make them disciples of His faith, His courage, and His brotherly heart of goodwill—and send them into the world to persuade men to become little brothers of the Lord Jesus. Since the Church cannot bless others with a life it does not possess, it must renew its life of vision and power in a higher fellowship.

First of all, fellowship with God the Father of Man is the profound need, the synthesis of all needs, in the world of to-day. We are living in a time of twilight—pray God, a morning twilight—not clear, not dark; an age of intense social activity and pathetic spiritual wistfulness; an age whose mood is not crass denial, as in days ago, but spiritual bewilderment and indifference—vague in its thought of God and bereft of vivid, creative fellowship with Him. At the heart of the present unrest and discord—as we may know by looking into our own hearts—there is a haunting hunger for a profounder and more satisfying experience of God; a more personal sense of a personal God. Here is the dilemma: we see that the meaning life lies in “the redemptive making of personality,” and yet the tendency of thought is toward the impersonal. By the same token, no philosophical Absolute, no hierarchy of natural laws, no infinite Autocrat to whom men are but puppets, no fumbling finite God, will meet the needs of an age

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which reads religion in terms of democracy and democracy in terms of religion. Only a God in worshipping whom we are on the summit of moral devotion, spiritual vision and social achievement, and in serving whom we best serve our fellows by building heroic character into a brotherly world-order, can meet the needs of this stupendous time. Otherwise we are left to struggle together or drift apart in the midst of forces we can neither understand nor resist, groping toward a new and more humane social order, but unable to find it, having no vision of God equal to our ethical ideal. Only the vision of God in Christ, in following whom we are lifted into the realm of moral values, personal relations, and social mysticism, is adequate to the demands of an age of world-rebuilding. Of that vision the Church is at once the witness and the interpreter, and its supreme mission to-day is to make it real, eloquent, and commanding in the world of to-day.

Fellowship, no less, of man with man it is the function of the Church to cherish and exalt, since, if we are to find God, we must find Him and serve Him together. Surely, in an age hungry for fellowship like the age in which we live, the Church has an appealing opportunity, if it is wise enough and brave enough to take it. The modern man is not only wistful, but lonely of soul, and his yearn-

ing for fellowship is deep and passionate, as cults, crafts, guilds, and fraternities without number make plain. For that reason, if the Church is to serve this age, it must realize the Will to Fellowship, and no longer set up dogmas, rites, and orders to limit and exclude. Yet no failure of the Church is more pitifully tragic than its failure of fellowship, even in its own life, and still more in extending it to the multitudes whose spiritual loneliness is so appalling. A famous Bishop thinks it well that his people should pray with Free Church folk in times of national peril, but he prefers that the meeting be held "on neutral ground, that is either out of doors or in some building other than church or chapel."¹ Truly, if we cannot pray together, except on some spiritual No Man's Land, talk of reunion seems idle. Such barriers must be broken down and left behind, along with much else that belonged to an age now ending, if we are to meet the needs of the new world. Not identity of opinion about Jesus, but sympathy with His spirit and the wish to follow in His way and learn of Him, should be the basis of fellowship in the Church of to-day, as it was at the beginning.

More tragic still is the failure of fellowship in respect to the classes into which society is divided—like geologic strata—making the brotherly life

¹ "Dominant Ideas," by Bishop Gore.

seem like a fourth dimension. If we analyze the membership of our churches—especially Protestant churches—we find among them few who work for a daily wage, and most of those are of the more skilled and educated workers. The early Christians won by the apostolic preachers were almost entirely of the lower middle classes, as are nearly all of the first converts on our mission fields. But every pastor will testify from the facts of his own parish that it is almost impossible to mix the lower and middle classes in his church, much less to bring the wage-earner into fellowship with the employing class. It has been so always. But must it always be so? Is there no dynamic of brotherhood in the Gospel of Christ to overcome the class consciousness based upon trade, title, or cash account? Cannot the arms of Christ—still outstretched on the Cross—be loosened to clasp us in one embrace, without regard to race or rank? Of course, in every time the Church has taught right personal relations within the accepted social system, but has it no function to perform, no power to employ, in *changing the systems for the better?*

No doubt it is true that the first and chief interest of the Church is the redemption and training of souls, but can she fulfil that mission and be indifferent, or even neutral, in the conflict in which the souls of men are fighting for life? We need

a new synthesis which shall see the ideal of the race in socialized individuals and in social relationships that find their fulfilment in noble personalities. The human personality is the thing of highest and most ultimate worth in the universe, so far as we can see, because it reveals those values which alone give dignity and meaning to existence. But personality is a social creation, and whatever hampers, thwarts, or degrades it is to be fought as an enemy. Here the Church finds its marching orders to lead a sleepless crusade on behalf of a world fit to live in, where all may have a chance to enter into the full spiritual inheritance of the race. If it is true to its faith and worthy of its Master—who held that it were better for a man never to have been born than to cause one of “these little ones” to stumble—it will not rest nor grow weary while poor housing, sweatshops, tenements, unjust wages, industrial inequity, the butchery of war, and manifold social evils ruin human souls. Against all these evils, and others of like kind, the Church must wage war without quarter, as Isaiah and Amos fought the evils of their day, demanding justice for the poor, the oppressed, and the victims of social injury.

Not in protest alone, but also, and much more, in behalf of the great constructive enterprises now afoot, the Church must bear collective witness,

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making an enlightened and organized Christian conscience felt. For, whatever else Christianity may or may not be, there is none to deny that it is an international religion. Jesus struck the universal note, over against the idea which identified the Kingdom of Heaven with any single race or nation. He was a world-Teacher—as He is a world-Redeemer—and His Gospel knew no limits of race, rank, or frontier. Such a religion is more than ever needed to-day in rebuke of the false and fateful idea of nationality, born of the Napoleonic era and fashioned to sanctify political greed and military conquest. It is not Christian, and never will be until it is made to yield to the spirit of service. In letters of fire it is being written before our eyes that the hope of the world lies in the spiritual guide, which to the sanction of the World-Parliament now formed must add the consecration of the Kingdom of Heaven. The world waits for the Church to realize its unity—not its uniformity, much less a gigantic ecclesiasticism—as an international fellowship, as against the false, class Internationals which have usurped its place and its right to lead. This at least is true, hide it from ourselves as we may: in the world to-day the individual and the social gospel belong together, and neither will long survive the shipwreck of the other.

Not for a day, not for an hour, must the Church pause in its labour of education, of evangelism, or of comfort, much less must it retrench its grand missionary enterprise. Even now the things for which it stands are less potent than once they were, because our young people are allowed to grow up largely in ignorance of what its teaching and purpose really are. It is manifest to all that one age has ended and another is beginning with new outlooks, new demands, new opportunities. Some things must be left behind. Other methods must be employed, though we may go back and learn much from the ministry of Dr. Chalmers in Glasgow, of which we read in his series of pamphlets on "The Civic and Christian Economy of Our Large Towns." Our Christian message itself, as Père Gratry said, must be restated to meet the needs of a new and strange time in accordance with the eternal antiquity of the truth. From the first the Church has been a seeker after the lost, and she must not abandon that Divine and ceaseless quest. But what she has done for individuals here and there, she must now undertake to do for society as a whole, if the uprising and inevitable world-democracy is to fulfil its hopes and do its work.

When Edward Irving began his ministry in Glasgow, well-nigh ninety years ago, he resolved

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to “demonstrate a higher style of Christianity—something more magnanimous, more heroical, than this age is accustomed to.” Many things our distracted age needs, but nothing does it need so much as a higher, more heroic style of Christianity. Let us give ourselves to it, nor think it too great an achievement for the Church of to-day, for such must be the will of Him who was dead and is alive for evermore, who loved the Church and gave Himself for it.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.

VII

THE WORD OF GOD

"The word of God is living and active."—HEB. 4: 12.

FROM end to end the Bible is a unity in faith, in spirit, and in purpose, yet it nowhere speaks of itself as a whole. It is too wise, too modest, too intent on the great story it has to tell. Nor does it ever call itself the Word of God. Indeed, it is a striking fact that in the Bible the name "Word of God" is never once applied to anything written. No, the Word of God is living, active, creative, a seed, a fire, a light, a power at once august and intimate, and no book, nor all the books in the world, can contain it. Every land, every people, every age hears it, each in its own tongue, and because there are always listening ears, however few,

One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world has never lost.

The Word of God is eternal. It spoke to man before he had learned to write; it will still speak when all books are faded and forgotten. Heaven

and earth may pass away, but the Word of God will not fail of fulfilment. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of God endureth forever." What God has to say to man, and what at last He actually did say, is something too great, too wonderful for any human words, even the most eloquent or searching or patient, ever to tell. It is a Living Word, not known by pronunciation, but only by incarnation. As it has been written: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth."

What, then, is the Bible? It is a record of the God-revealing experiences of the poets, prophets, and apostles of a noble people, as they learned of God through long, tragic ages and wrote what they had learned. Not in writings primarily, but in living history, in actual life, God shows Himself to men. From the Bible we learn not only the truth made known in ancient time, but the method by which it was revealed, and the one is hardly less vital than the other. God spoke to the people which were of old, as He speaks to-day, if we have

ears to hear, through life, through facts and events and actions and persons, through history and reflection, and the Bible tells us of the life and action, both personal and national, in which He was revealed. Thus God speaks in the Bible, but He does not write. Then, as now, it was revelation through experience, and the value of the Bible is not only that it tells us what men learned of God in the long ago, but that it helps us to read His newer Word as it is written in the events and actions of to-day.

Here lies the answer to those two profound questions: Does God speak to man to-day? If so, how? Primarily, men are inspired, not writings. Wherever a man, by any means soever, learns what reality is, and what are the laws of the world, he is reading the Word of God. Often he can decipher only here a line and there a stanza, but God is speaking to him. Thus, when Job passed through his bitter trial he learned a new Word of God about suffering, namely, that suffering is not always punishment; and he was able to utter it in a drama that has in it the wide spaces of the desert, its lucid skies, its loneliness and storm. When David was an outcast, a fugitive hunted and pursued, finding shelter in caves, he learned that God lives in the heart more than in palaces, and he told in song what he had learned in sorrow.

When the king died and the nation was shaken, and men felt the insecurity of all things mortal, it was given Isaiah to look through that event and see One who never dies and a throne that cannot be shaken; and he made record of his vision. When Jeremiah was left to stand alone in defiance of the people whom he loved—one of the grandest and most tragic figures in history—he made a new adventure in prayer, and rose above book-religion to life-religion; as, later, the Prophet of the Exile discovered, in the dark night of his sorrow, the Suffering Servant of God walking the dreamy ways of prophecy.

After this manner the Bible was written, slowly and painfully; not so much written as wrought out amid the struggle and sorrow of human life, each page lived before it was written—each line, as Whitman said, wet with human tears. Hence the power that is in it which passes like fire from heart to heart adown the ages; and hence, also, the close connection between this Book and the living and abiding word of God. No other book has such power to comfort and command. A famous Master of Balliol has told us that we should “read the Bible as we read any other book”; and that is the surest way to learn that it is unlike any other book. The Bible is literature, if by that we mean “the lasting expression in words of the meaning

of life"; but it is something more. It is not art, it is life. Men feel this to be so. Let a man try to read the Bible as literature only, and he will find that in the drama which it unfolds there can be no spectators, no lookers on. Everybody—the reader included—is drawn into the action; each must take sides or make "the great refusal." Something reaches out from its pages and pulls us into the play of its realities. It is not a fiction of what life might have been; it is life itself speaking to us.

Nor is this to disparage literature and its service to the human spirit. Far from it. How we love to wander in its Chamber of Imagery, amid forms lovely and haunting, where Homer sings, and Plato speaks, and Hamlet dies; and there are lines in the great poets—often, even, in lesser poets—which open, in the light of a flash, a vista half on earth and half in heaven. Literature is beautiful and benign, free, ideal, and richly rewarding. But the Bible is more compelling than persuasive. It does not entertain; it commands. It is too serious, too earnest, too honest to care for art for the sake of art. Its art is artless, its purpose being to lay hold of the heart, the conscience, the will, bringing to the service and solace of man the truth made known in the agony and bloody sweat of mortal life. When a man tries to read

the Fifty-first Psalm as he reads any other poem, he finds himself face to face with God and the soul, humbled, subdued, rebuked, exalted. He will not doubt its inspiration; the sense that he is one with that long-dead singer will melt his heart, and he will say, if he be wise, "This thing is of God." Such is the power of the Bible, as unique as it is searching, and if we let it have its way with us, yielding our souls to its passion for righteousness, and its sense of the Eternal Life in Time, it will lead us infallibly in the way everlasting.

Yes, infallibly. Argument is not needed; the fact proves it. The Bible grew up out of a religious life, rich, profound, revealing, and if rightly used and obeyed it will reproduce in us, infallibly, the kind of life which produced it.

No other kind of infallibility is needed. Strong men, serious men who wish to fight the battle of character through to something like decency, ask for no surer token. As the Bible is a Book of Life, so its verity and value are to be known only in the midst of life. Experience is the final test. "The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Texts often tell us their meaning if we turn them over, and if we invert this text we learn that the word that is nigh unto us, in our mouth, and in our hearts, is the Word of God. Evermore the chal-

lence of Jesus is, If we do, we shall know. The writers of the Bible did not argue; they obeyed. They lived before they wrote. They were men of like passions as ourselves, of like faiths and fears and failings. They wrestled with reality; they were sorely tried, and their cries of anguish echo to this day—deathless trumpets from the oblivion of olden time. In weakness they were made strong; in darkness they saw “the brightness on the other side of life”; in death they were not dismayed. They show us in actual life, in outward experience and inward realization, how the victory is won—how truth is learned by living.

Here, in this wise and faithful Book, is the very stuff of life itself; the human realities out of which, not as a theory, but as a fact, faith in God grows. How many they are! The two characters of this Book are the Sky and the Dirt. Its story is the romance of God and man and their eternal life together. Sunrise, sunset, summer, autumn, winter, calm, storm, birth, marriage, love, laughter, pain, sorrow, sin, repentance, the broken heart and the open grave—these old, familiar, human things live in the Bible against a background of Eternity. Those men of old needed guidance as they faced the mystery of life and realized how many questions remain unanswered. They needed comfort in sorrow, courage in disappointment, hope in fail-

ure. They needed forgiveness for sin, inspiration in monotony, and companionship as one by one their friends dropped away, leaving them to walk alone. Above all they needed light as they looked out upon the world of their day, so tangled and so troubled, and were tempted to despair of finding a way out. They found what they needed in God, and in God alone, and set down in simple words what they learned of His will, His care, His plans for them and their duty to Him. God was made known to them in heroic experience, in sins forgiven, in minds made clear of earthly mists, in hearts healed of the old hurt of life—that dumb and nameless pain that throbs at the heart of our being as we march or creep or crowd through the welter of war, poverty, disease, and death.

What about our own day? This, at least: God is not the great I WAS, but the great I AM, and His Word speaks to us to-day, as of old, through the facts, the events, the actions, the persons of our time, in actual life as it unfolds, in history as it is wrought out in blood and fire and tears. "This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears," not as some one event was foreshadowed in the imagery of Ezekiel or the visions of the Apocalypse, but as the same laws of righteousness which ruled in the past fulfil themselves anew in the out-working of events—in the overthrow of injustice,

in the triumph of right over might, in the deliverance of the poor and the afflicted. "God is not dumb that He should speak no more." He who awakened the soul of Israel and lifted Isaiah to a purer vision through the march of the Assyrian army must have some word to speak to us in the upheavals and overturnings of our day, Manifestly, it is a word not only for our individual leading, but for humanity in its collective life, if we have the insight to read and interpret it. But who is sufficient for these things?

How can we read aright the strange, troubled, tragic history of our own day? Here the Bible is our surest guide, prophet, and friend, if we would trace the ways of God in "long-lived storm of great events," since His newer Word must confirm the old, fulfilling itself in the processes of the years. The mighty prophets were the first to see that events do not run wild, but are held and guided by an unseen Hand. Not only one nation, but as their vision broadened, all nations, all lands, all ages, were seen to be subject to Divine control; all events of history—the march of armies, the fate of dynasties, the fall of cities—are at the bidding of His will. Assyria was a razor to cut away things outgrown. Egypt was a pruning hook. There is no fact to-day, however appalling, that those watchers of the ways of God did not face.

Then, as now, the hills trembled and the uproar of the people was like the roaring of the sea, but they saw God in all, through all, over all. They discerned, now dimly, now clearly, the moral, social, and spiritual purpose of God in history, and it is thus that their Book of Vision is a light to our feet in this far-off age.

For what was true in the long ago is true to-day. God was made known to the prophets and apostles, as He is revealed to-day, in living history as "a creative Personality, a dauntless Saviour, the Builder of a brotherly social order, the universal and eternal good-will." To-day we must think out anew our faith in God, not only as that faith is related to our individual struggle for the good, but as it involves a new sense of the relation of nations to one another, and their unity of interest and obligation. In a terrible text-book we have been reading the Word of God that He has "made of one blood every nation of men," and that there is no security, no peace, until we learn to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Him. Surely, if God is revealed by the action of events, we shall miss His living word if the terrible events of the last four years do not evoke in us a larger thought and a kindlier feeling toward all races of men, thereby interpreting the solidarity of humanity in which all peoples are members one of

another. It must be the clear will of God by these, His acts, to lead us toward the fulfilment of that vision, so often foretold in the Bible, when

Nation with nation, land with land,
Unarmed shall live as comrades free;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.

Again, it must be that a revealing Word of God is speaking to our humanity, if it will but listen, in its suffering, its misery, and in the voice of its weeping for the dead. Here, too, the tender heart of the Bible is true to our deep need, and its leaves are for our healing. After all, our woe is new only in its magnitude, not in its quality. Hunger is hunger, pain pain, death death the world over; in Judea as in England. The seers of old saw in suffering not a sign of the forgetfulness of God, still less a proof of His weakness or of His indifference, but the Cloud of His Presence. Nay, more: the supreme surprise of the Bible, that which filled its writers with a wonder beyond words, is that God suffers too, suffers with man and for man. Here we enter where words cannot follow. Even the stately, awe-struck words of the Prophet of the Exile, for ever memorable in their beauty, do not tell half the depth and richness of this truth. Only a Living Word made flesh, pure, heroic,

lovely, tried and found true, suffering but victorious, walking by our side, laying His hand upon our sickness, cooling our fever, cleansing, teaching, enfolding, upholding, can tell the whole truth.

Yes, the poet was right; God may have other words for other worlds, but His supreme Word for this world, yesterday, to-day, forever, is Christ! He is the central Figure of the Bible, its crown, its glory, its glow-point of vision and revelation. Take Him away and its light grows dim. He fulfilled the whole Book, its history, its poetry, its prophecy, its ritual, even as He fulfils our deepest yearning and our highest hope. Ages have come and gone, but He abides—abides because He is real, because He is unexhausted, because He is needed. Little is left to-day save Christ—Himself smitten and afflicted, bruised of God and wounded—but He is all we need. If we hear Him, follow Him, obey Him, we shall walk together into a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness and love—He is the Word of God.

VIII

THE HOUSE OF THE SEER¹

"Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is."

—I SAM. 9: 18.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

—PROV. 29: 18.

THOSE who have vision can picture the house of the seer, standing foursquare on the hillside, with its flat roof and its wide-ranging outlook. There the prophet welcomed the coming of morning or watched the fading glow of the sun as it went down in the great sea, while the stars gathered like an army in the infinite field of night. Stern he may have been, rebuking men for their sin and unbelief, but he was a man of profound sympathy, and his house was a place of healing. Reverence, reality, and love were there, a sense of the mystery and worth of life, a vision of God moving in the courses of human history,

¹Preached at the Recognition of Rev. A. A. Lee, St. James Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, January 12, 1919; also in City Temple, the service attended by a delegation of theological students.

and an unlimited hope. There thought toiled in the service of the spirit, and faith made trial of the unknown ways of the Eternal.

Thither, to the house of the seer, all sorts of people, in all sorts of difficulty, made their way. The mother anxious about her child, the patriot in despair over the faction and feud of the land; the old in their love of an order that seemed doomed, the young with their eager yearning for a better day; those baffled in the trivial quest of lost asses, and those who were in quest of God—all wended their way to the house of the seer. It was a centre of love, of light, of consolation for a multitude of weary people who sought its peace. There were searching of heart and high resolve, as the awful issues of human life were tried by ideal values, without which nothing has any value. The young sought its privilege in the morning; the old craved its forward look at eventide. Thither we must go betimes, in humility and awe, to renew our sense of "a credible God," and give new vows of loyalty to His mighty will.

Always, the house of the seer is the chief ornament and distinction in any city. When we think of Florence, we think of its heroic and mighty seer, whose apocalyptic visions made men tremble, and whose voice of pity was as tender, as haunting, as a divine caress. When we think of Strasburg, we

see once more the shining figure of Tauler, and his band of the "friends of God," as he stood in the midst of the Black Death, when others had fled, nursing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, burying the dead—the house of the seer the one place of light in a city shrouded as by a pall. When we think of Birmingham, with its grey smoke-cloud of puffing industrialism, the names of Dale and Newman come to mind. They were utterly unlike, and as far apart as men could well be intellectually, yet each in his own way added lustre to the fame of his city. Better is it, as Beecher said of David Swing, who came to the new, up-rising metropolis of Chicago, proclaiming a Christianity that was also a civilization—better is it than shops and ships, or a new way of building houses, that a city should have given to it an authentic teacher of wise and good and beautiful truth.

For, "where there is no vision, the people perish"—literally they cast off restraint, defy moral law, and become a mob. Never was there such need of clear thinking in the light of the eternal moralities as there is to-day, when anarchy is running wild, and running red, over so much of the earth. By vision is meant a sense of the ideal, of the spiritual, of the eternal, and history has shown over and over again that when that vision fades, the people fall into licentiousness and greed, giving

reins to the wild horses that ride to hell. When the Bible would account for those periods of dismal moral decay, when lust ran riot and God seemed dead, it says, "there was no open vision"; and again, "there was no more any prophet." Truly, if the light of the moral ideal in man be darkness, how deep and awful is that darkness! Lord Morley, who assuredly knows the facts, tells us plainly that the revolt in the days of Voltaire was a revolt against chastity, a loosening of moral sanctions, a lowering of the moral ideal. As Isaiah said long ago, "They who err in vision stumble in judgment," and fall into the mire of the pit, blind leaders of the blind.

What is this strange power of vision without which we lose our way and fight dim battles in a doubtful land? Jesus used two words when He said, "A little while and ye behold me no more; again, a little while, and ye shall see me." The first, rendered *behold*, is the word from which we derive the word *theorem*, and refers to the demonstration of physical sight; the second, translated *see*, refers to the sight of the soul, and is often used by Sophocles to describe the finer perceptions of the mind. No fact about man is better attested than the presence in him of the power of spiritual insight. Every man has it in some measure, but there are souls so fine, so delicate and sure of

sight, that they seem to have been born very near the veil which swings between the world of sense and the world unseen. They "see the invisible," to use the Bible paradox, and it is therefore that we call them seers—prophetic souls, divinely illumined, whose insight lights the way of humanity. Hence the wise hymn, with its deep sense of abiding need, and its prayer that the succession of prophetic light and power be not broken:

God of the prophets!
Bless the prophets' sons;
Elijah's mantle
O'er Elisha cast.

Such is the necessity, and such the function of the seer in the life of humanity. First of all, he stands as an unweariable witness to the reality and authority of the Ideal and the immutable necessity of loyalty to it. Despite the normal drift toward externalism and materialism, he bears testimony in behalf of the life of the spirit, reminding men that their happiness depends not upon things but upon morals. He at least is not deceived by delusions, but seeks to recall his fellows from the glitter and semblance of life to homage for truth, beauty, righteousness, and character, from the passing show to the eternal realities which, because they are eternal and real, are the only things that really

matter. He divines the moral meaning of events, as Dean Church did in his letter in 1870, to his friend Asa Gray, the Harvard botanist, at a time when even Gladstone was rejoicing in a grand and united *Vaterland*. "The means which have been deliberately chosen to bring it about are simply hateful"; and he added, "the law of retributive justice is for Germany as well as for France, and for the one, as for the other, it will wait to claim its due." There spoke an acute moral perception, akin to that of Amos in his judgment of the nations of his day, and to that of Isaiah who opposed an alliance with Egypt as a covenant with death.

Never was this power of vision needed as it is to-day, and if it is not vouchsafed we are doomed to grope and stumble,

For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Thus to the power of divining the trend of facts, forces, events, ideas, the seer must add the insight, the art, the "magic of the necessary word," to visualize the thing that ought to be and is to be. In a note to the chorus of his "Hellas," Shelley wrote: "Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, and so forth, may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate, however darkly, a period of regeneration and happiness is

a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign." None the less, it is our duty to do so, doubly so in a day of deep wistfulness when men are watching for a light to brighten the skyline of their hope. If we believe in the possibility and necessity of a world organized on a basis of justice and good-will, we must body it forth, making the invisible vivid and compelling to the eyes of men. As we may read:

"Our task is to fill the minds of men with a new Pilgrim's Progress out of a condemned social order into one after the heart of Christ, and to paint the new celestial city as concretely and with far minuter ethical detail than Bunyan sketched that of which his pilgrims had sight from the Delectable Mountains. . . . Nothing is comparable in haunting power to the ideal made concrete in vision. Men must see what may be before they will resolve that it is so good that they will venture their all to make it come true. In every section of life upon which we look—a heart's sorrow, a nation's ambition, a child's hopefulness—we must see what is not there, but may be there when the waiting God is allowed to come in and reign. This is a time for believing dreaming in the presence of God in Christ. While we muse, the fire kindles, and we speak and make men fellow-conscripts of the vision splendid."¹

There is no need to say that the pulpit demands intellectual power, the more so in an era of the-

¹"In a Day of Social Rebuilding," by H. S. Coffin.

ological break-up and social readjustment. Information must serve inspiration. Take intellect out of religion, give it over to the care of crude, half-educated, narrow men, out of sympathy with their times, and it will be reduced to superstition. From St. Paul to Jonathan Edwards our Christianity has won its way through an apostolic succession of great intellects in the pulpit. But more important than intellect, even, is that tender, sympathetic faculty to be found in the soul of every true minister; a something akin to what we feel in the poems of Burns—that faculty which evokes the colours in grey human lives, as the sunlight brings out the golden threads in a little girl's brown hair. This loving genius has been the central and inviting charm of every historic pulpit. In the voices of the great preachers one hears not only "the still sad music of humanity," its shout of joy and its sob of grief, but the blended notes of the passion of the lover, the yearning of the father, and the wooing tones of a mother. To be of any service a preacher must love folk, just folk, all sorts of folk, with all their ills and evils, their petty ways of thinking and their ugly ways of doing, because he knows the hidden, unguessed, unbelievable goodness that is in them. He must love them for what they are, for what they are to be—love them as his Master loved them—for the story of Divine pity

was never yet believed from lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity.

My brother, you and I are dwarfed by such an ideal of our office, as King David would be dwarfed should he stand beside the statue of him by Angelo; but we dare not lower it an iota. Since the dawn of our Christian era *there has never been such an opportunity as there is now for a broad, virile, seer-like ministry, aglow with faith in God and love of man.* Between a petrified dogmatism and an erratic radicalism, there is room for a pulpit wise with the wisdom of insight, free as the air, and in many tones and keys eloquent for God and the higher human life. If we are to speak to our age—speak to its “condition,” as George Fox would say—we must know it, love it, live in it, feel the ache of its aspiration, and think in the drift of its deeper conclusions, and not give way to denunciatory scolding of it. The high themes are here; the human heart is here; the holy day is here. To-day, as in all the past, sin stains, sorrow wounds, and death smites with its tender, terrible stroke, and men yearn, as of yore, for that spell, wrought by insight into the soul, and the evocation of the religious atmosphere, as old as the world and as mysterious as the wind in the trees. It is for the men of to-day, whose hearts God has touched, to hear the dim-

brooding note of the modern soul astray in its own life, and speak to it with the accent of power, as the men of other days spoke for God to their vanished times.

Looking out over the teeming world of to-day, so full of tumult, so torn by strife, so troubled, "tell me, I pray thee, where is the house of the seer?" There is only one wise thing for us to do to-day, and that is to seek the place of vision; that alone is practical. Surely the first and most vital service of the Church to our tormented age is that it must be a place, a fellowship, where "the sweet voice sounds and the vision dwells." The office of the ministry is sacramental. It is creative. It belongs to a man by virtue not only of his temperament, his poetic gift and his social passion, but also, and much more, by his longing to be a saint of the Most High. The test of any ministry is not its eloquence, but the regenerative note that is in it, conveying the living word of God to living men. When the Church honours the pulpit—honours insight, veracity, sincerity, and pure motives in the service of the truth—the pulpit will honour it, bringing authentic leadership to its service. If your minister is not what he ought to be, what he wants to be, gather close about him with sympathy, prayer, and yearning request, and make an atmosphere in which his spirit can bloom.

The minister is a messenger of the truth of God, and a servant of the Church for that sake—meaning by the Church what the word really means, the called out, the company of those of every sect and name—those also of no sect and no name—who are born of the Spirit to a life of vision and service. Into this Church Invisible and Immortal the minister must lead and lift his people, making Churches the Church of the living God, obliterating sects in behalf of the fellowship of Humanity in the life of the Father of Man. For this service he must have sympathy, patience, compassion, benignity, and above all, the light of God in his heart by which to make the Kingdom of Heaven something more than a visionary scene suspended in the sky. To make the eternal reality real, to lift weary human souls into the presence of God and detain them there, to bring healing to the wounded and hope to those in despair—that is great, and there is nothing that is greater.

Glorious is the history of our Christian pulpit; its great names shine like stars in the crown of humanity. It has been a light in darkness, a voice of melting pity in a hard world, a rebuker of injustice, a pleader for purity and honour, a witness for the living Christ who is the hope of the world. O young man, seeking a vocation worthy of your powers, if you would touch the souls of men, if you

would refine and exalt their faith, if you would teach sorrowful eyes to see majestic meanings in life; if you have hopes such as these, enter the Christian pulpit. Enter it reverently and with a pure heart; make it a throne of beauty, a citadel of integrity, a watch-tower of hope—and may you tell the truth as it is in Jesus in a voice so haunting, so healing, that it will echo in the hearts of men after you have fallen asleep.

IX

NEHEMIAH THE LAYMAN

"The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build."—NEH. 2: 20.

NOWHERE is Joseph Parker more delightfully suggestive than in his exposition of the Memoirs of Nehemiah. Nor is it to be wondered at, because it is one of the most fascinating books in the Bible, not so much a biography as a diary, and rich in self-communings. Between the lines one can almost see the strong, earnest, kindly face of the writer, grown old and living over in his mind the days of his prime, telling us out of an accumulation of memories, with frequent asides, of a great work he did in days ago. Reading his diary, we come to love the man himself, as well as to admire his work, and if his name is associated with only one achievement we agree with him that it was an important work. What he writes is not a dry report, but the human side of his task, how he was led to undertake it, the difficulties he met, the enemies who hindered

him, and in telling us these things he gives us much of himself.

Perhaps a brief sketch of the background of his achievement will bring both the man and his work nearer to us. Indeed, we have much to learn from Nehemiah and his work of rebuilding a shattered commonwealth, and it is not strange that his period is much in our thought to-day as a parable, if nothing more, of the task that confronts us. Not all of the Jews of the exile returned to the old land, even when the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus opened the way. Many were prosperous traders content to live in an alien land, willing to lose both their race and their faith for the sake of ease and gain. But the spiritual remnant, often referred to by the prophets, eagerly embraced the opportunity of returning, and their exodus passed through three distinct stages, each directed by different leaders, at different times. The first expedition, under Zerubbabel and Joshua the priest, was religious, as befitted a people in whose life religion was the sovereign interest. Its object was not to rebuild the city or the State, but to revive and refound the racial faith—as if to teach us, since history is philosophy teaching by example, that if we are to rebuild a shattered world its foundation must be laid on religious faith.

They accomplished their task of rebuilding the

Temple, in the face of all difficulties; but no sooner was it finished than a new problem arose—that of religious instruction. Their sacred writings were for the most part lost, or forgotten, just as our holy writings are neglected by the multitude, unread, unstudied. Their prophets were unpractical, if not apocalyptic in character, as we see from the visions of Zechariah, and we have too many of the same kind—men who are looking for a new Advent in the sky instead of trying to set up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Those ancient workers were faced, as we are faced, by the task of intensifying the spiritual life of the people under the most drab and undramatic conditions. To meet this need a second expedition set out from Babylon under the leadership of Ezra, the scribe. His work was to put the written Word of God in form for the regular instruction of the people, that they might know the spiritual nature of their faith, its covenants, its obligations, and its promises. Such a task lies before us, waiting for our wisdom, our patient zeal, and the finest skill we can bring to it.

Here, too, the parallel runs close to our situation. Ezra met two great difficulties, one of which was the pernicious activity of the mongrel race of Samaritans who sought to pollute both the blood and the faith of the people. And that difficulty, like all others, was made more difficult by the di-

vision of the people into sects, the separatists and the secularists—later known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These two sects, developed on foreign soil, troubled the religious life of the Jews for ages. The former sought to preserve their racial purity by religious exclusiveness, and the latter desired liberal relations with other nations. They were two extremes, on the one side obscurantism, on the other latitudinarianism, and we know how, between them, they hindered the ministry of Jesus and accomplished His death. How like our own day it is, when sect is set over against sect, one extreme against another, and the real work of our religion languishes. Between the falsehood of extremes the middle path of wise and sure advance is made very difficult. What was needed then, as now, were able leaders, men of spiritual motive and practical capacity, who knew how to take hold of a hard job and see it through; and that was what Nehemiah did.

Hence the third expedition from Babylon, led by Nehemiah, the specific object of which was to rebuild the city walls, to organize and tranquillize the people, and so adjust internal affairs that religious teachers could carry out their work. Nehemiah, be it remembered, was not a priest, as he takes pains to tell us, much less a theologian. He made no such pretensions. He was a layman who

knew his limitations, but he also knew the limitations of the priests and the muddle they had made of things. He knew that his work was secondary, and a means to an end, but he also saw that without it the higher work could not be done. He knew that when his work was done he would sink into the background, and he was content to have it so. None the less, he was a wise and faithful man, truly religious and practically capable, who saw the thing that needed to be done, gave his whole heart and hand to it, and got it done. No wonder, in old age, he looks upon the work of those years with a glow of satisfaction, and we may well envy him one of the most real pleasures of life. He enjoyed his work, in spite of its difficulties, and he enjoys telling us about it, albeit we never feel that he is telling the story for his own glory. If he speaks much about himself it is because he was in fact the leader and centre of the movement; and beneath his seeming egotism we learn to know a truly modest and noble man.

Once again, it need hardly be said, the parallel between that ancient situation and the task of the Church in an age of social rebuilding, is very striking. The theologians, as usual, have made a botch of things. They have their work to do, thinking out the great issues of life and faith, and fashioning the minds of men in noble ideas and

fruitful insight. Beyond that they cannot go very far. Ecclesiastics are in like case. How futile they are is plainly manifest, if we may judge by recent deliverances in respect to the reunion and reorganization of the Church. It is a strange blindness which thinks that we can make up by manipulation what is lacking in inspiration, and that by a jugglery of words and forms, in behalf of what is called regularity, we can redeem the Church from its ghastly failure of moral leadership in the greatest crisis in history. Such men ought to step aside, and let plain-spoken, clear-seeing, practical laymen take hold and rebuild the Church for the service of the age. My appeal is to the laymen of Britain and America to come forward and set the pulpit free from the serving of tables that it may have time, and quiet, to brood its visions and recover its prophetic power.

But to return to Nehemiah. He tells us how he made prayer to God for strength and resource, and a noble prayer it is, which he sets down for our inspiration and example. It was his own prayer, not one read out of a book, asking for guidance and courage, that he might strike at evils with the power of a fixed and definite purpose. After laying before God the need that burdened his heart, he prayed: "Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands"; and, being a layman, he set about to

answer his prayer by strengthening the hands of others. It was not enough to speak to God; he must needs speak to his majesty King Artaxerxes, in whose service he was a humble cup-bearer. He did not simply ask Divine assistance and stop, as the manner of some is—he thought, he planned, he laboured, he left nothing undone; and it was just because of his industry and sagacity that he could be used of God. With Nehemiah religion and patriotism were one and the same thing, as they were with Gladstone when he said that he went to church, even if a sermon was often dull, because he loved England.

How charming is the account of his interview with the king, a day he could never forget, and he sets down the exact date, for it seemed to him like a flood-tide in the affairs of men. "The queen also sitting by him," he adds parenthetically, with his love of detail, as if, like Columbus at the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, he felt that in the quicker insight and warmer sympathy of the queen lay the final secret of his success in the undertaking on which he had set his heart. The king asked him how long it would take and when he would return. "And I set him a time," says Nehemiah, so carefully had he thought it all out even to the smallest detail. There must have been a lump in his throat when he wrote: "The king

granted me according to the good hand of God upon me." At once the king gave him letters to the royal forester instructing that official, and he recalls the exact words, to "give Nehemiah timber to make beams for the walls of the city and for the house that he would erect." He also gave letters to "the governors beyond the river" that they should allow him to pass through on his way to Judea. Besides, he sent captains of the army to protect him from roving bands of robbers in the lonely region over which he must journey.

Some one has said that the eyes are the front doors of the mind, while the ears are but the side doors. Seeing is believing! Nehemiah did not realize what a task lay before him until he rode around the walls at midnight, by moonlight, and saw how complete was the ruin of the city of his fathers. The scene was enough to fill him with dismay, but Nehemiah was not of that kind. Nor must we be, if we are to reconstruct the City of God amidst the desolations of this embattled earth. He called a conference of the men of the city, the nobles, priests and rulers, and said to them: "Ye see the evil case we are in." But he added, "I told them of the hand of my God which was upon me and of the words of the king." His words were like a clarion call to action, and the men said: "Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened

their hands for the good work," working together, each one doing his part—even the sellers of perfumes—by building the part of the wall over against his own house, by the plan which Nehemiah records in his diary.

Time does not allow us to follow in detail the progress of the work, and how Sanballat, Tobiah, and other resourceful enemies, tried, first by ridicule, then by craft, then by threats, to stop it. Alarmed by the advance made, they asked Nehemiah to come down from the wall and discuss the matter. But he knew that there is safety in elevation, and, besides, having given the king an exact date, he had no time to waste talking. Nehemiah knew human nature—he was a layman—and he had a keen sense of humour. Again and again it flashes out in his narrative, as when a kinsman of Sanballat was found making free use of the town, in disregard of law, and Nehemiah remarks, "I chased him away." Nehemiah went away for a spell, and Tobiah took advantage of his absence to enter the city as if he were a citizen. When Nehemiah returned, he threw all his fine furniture out into the street. Greedy profiteers tried to ply their trade in the gates of the city on the Sabbath day, against the law. Nehemiah ordered it to be stopped, and naïvely remarks, "After this they came down to the gate, *once or twice*." That is

to say, he met them there, not by appointment, and it was at an end.

Truly, the more one studies Nehemiah, the more one admires his work and loves the workman. God gave him a ruined wreck, a lot of mud and rock and ordinary folk, and wily enemies to hinder. He mixed with it faith, courage, sagacity, humour, and the stuff of which dreams are made, and rebuilt the City of the Eternal. Such leaders we need to-day, men of power, of capacity, of vision, laymen who will bring their acumen to the service of every-day religion. My appeal is to laymen in behalf of the Church, not as an end in itself, but as an instrument, an opportunity. If it is not what it ought to be, make it so. If there are those who are making free use of it for their own ends, do as Nehemiah did, chase them out. Outside the Churches are many men of active and high moral excellence, of fine capacity, of flaming social passion—such workers as the Church needs if it is not to be merely a spiritual ambulance following in the wake of war—military or industrial—comforting and healing the wounded, useful as that is.

Now, consider. What we want is not union, but unity; not uniformity, but united action and effort in behalf of a fruitful spiritual life and a nobler social order. If the Church cannot be induced to unite to do the work appointed to it, manifestly

that work will be done outside and apart from it. Four of the most significant movements of our day are almost outside the Church: the Student Christian movement, the Brotherhood crusade, the Adult School work, and the Christian Associations. They are largely the work of laymen, exemplifying, as has been well said, not the form of unity, which matters little, but the spirit of unity, which matters much. They are tokens of the tendency of the age, pointing to the presence of a spirit which, if it has its way, will overcome the will to rivalry by the will to fellowship. If we had the sagacity of Nehemiah we should make the Church the centre and inspiration of enterprises such as these, as well as of others of like kind, and find the renewal of the life of the spirit in the service of man, which is the service of God.

When Nehemiah had finished his work as builder he withdrew into the background and let Ezra take up his task of teaching. But on the last great day, as the law was read to the people, he noted the sadness on the faces of those who listened, and came forward and said: "This is not a day of sadness and fasting, but of feasting and rejoicing, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." There lay the secret of his power, and alongside it let me leave the vision of a dear poet-friend whose words are like a trumpet:

We men of earth have here the stuff
Of Paradise—we have enough !
We need no other stones to build
The stairs into the Unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of man's immortal dream.
Here on the paths of every day—
Here on the common human way—
Is all the busy gods would take
To build a heaven, to mould and make
New Edens. Ours the task sublime
To build Eternity in Time !

X

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

"All the city was gathered together at the door. . . . And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed."—MARK I : 33-35.

THE Gospel of Mark might have been entitled the Acts of Jesus, so vividly does it show us the mighty Toiler who in the shortest time wrought the greatest work. Here we see Christ in direct contact with the suffering of the world, from morning until evening surrounded with every kind of human distress and woe. Hardly a page but echoes with the tramp of the multitude, as the sick, the forlorn, the demon-haunted, gather about Him, awaiting His touch of healing and His word of hope. The scene of the text is typical of a day in the life of Jesus. The last rays of the dying sun saw Him moving to and fro among the throng, healing their ills of body and of soul; and the grey dawn found Him alone in a solitary place, renewing His strength in the nourishing silence of God.

Again and again it is so recorded; and at times of crisis, as when He chose His twelve apostles, He was wont to spend the whole night in prayer. Such a fact brings Jesus nearer to us, doubly so when we remember that He was "tempted in all points as we are" and touched with a feeling for our infirmities. The two facts are closely related, that Jesus was terribly tried, terribly taxed, and that He was a man of prayer. And as His trials were no theatric fictions, but real struggles, so the strong cries and tears of the Son of Man were the expressions of real and poignant need. There are those who think that they can live without prayer, but Jesus could not do it. Against His practice of prayer all arguments as to its worth are invalid. Jesus did not argue about prayer; He prayed. His escapes into the silence filled His disciples with wonder, and, having followed Him one day, they overheard Him at prayer. What an experience—to hear Jesus pray! Listening, they realized that they did not know even the alphabet of that high art, because, at its best, prayer is not asking for favours: it is a worship of the will of God. No wonder they humbly made request: "Lord, teach us how to pray."

Howbeit, my point now is that the religious life, revealed in all its splendour in Jesus, has two elements—the tirelessness of doing good and the great

hush of prayer. These two aspects must always be kept together and kept in balance—action and quiet, ministry and meditation, work and worship, the service of God and the service of man. For religion is both mystical and practical, and when either side is emphasized to the neglect of the other it is one-sided and unsatisfying. Let a man in the lust of action be always busy, and full soon a blight as of palsy will fall over his spirit. Let him give himself to prayer and neglect the doing of good, and his prayer will become dry, mechanical, and profitless. Faith without works is dead, but works without faith are dead also. If we are to see our work in its true perspective, and thus do it intelligently and faithfully, we must renew our strength and vision in the silences. The Son of Man needed to resort to the stillness, and who are we that we should not have greater need? The records of Christian endeavour show that those who have stirred the world for righteousness have been those who in the wide and quiet place of vision have learned the secret of power.

Those who have ears may hear two cries echoing adown the centuries, the cry for justice and the cry for God. When Wordsworth was twenty years of age he walked with a friend through the Alps. It was in 1790, and the rumbling of the French Revolution was beginning, the bursting of

the bands of iniquity, the overthrow of ancient, brutal wrong. The poet heard it and rejoiced, for he believed that it was a purging fire "fanned by the breath of an angry Providence." While on his mountain tour he reached the Convent of Charreux, and there he saw that the life of prayer, of meditation, of the mystic who seeks to plumb the unplumbed depths and find a home for the human spirit in the Eternal, has a place in the life of man. It is not only valid but greatly needed. Further, he saw that the life of quiet, remote from the thunder of revolution, does not cut across the dream of social justice, but upholds it, permeates it, gives it height, depth, dignity, and consecration. Hence his plea that "these courts of mystery" might be spared for the sake of conquest over sense, hourly achieved through faith and meditative reason, since

Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there.

Even so it has been from the time when the penitential psalmists wrote on yonder side of the Pyramids, and so it will be until whatever is to be the end of mortal things. To-day, on the one side, we hear the cry, borne on every wind, for social reconstruction, and every man who has the heart of a man responds to that demand. Shattered by in-

conceivable calamity, the world must be rebuilt, if not as the Kingdom of Heaven, at least as a juster, freer, ampler, more humane society. No longer must a few men have the power to hurl millions into the hell of war. No longer must industry be organized for the benefit of a few, leaving the many to struggle for bread in a welter of misery. No longer must the best things be shut up within the walls of opulence but scattered broadcast for all to share. On the other side, not so loudly clamorous, but no less insistent—deep, elemental, awful, too grand for formulation—we hear, as from age to age in the past, another cry struggling up through the silence, and stammering itself out, half-uttered and half-dumb; the old, pathetic cry of the human soul which is an undertone of our life to-day, as in all the times ago:

“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him! As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!”

From out-of-the-way and unexpected places that cry reaches us, uniting our humanity in a colony of exiles seeking a country. Sixty years ago George Borrow made his tour through the Welsh hills, whereof he made notes, as was his habit, which appeared later in that charming narrative *Wild Wales*. On his way to Llangollen he spent

a Sunday at Chester, attending the morning service at the cathedral and in the afternoon listening to the Methodist field preachers. Toward evening he went for a stroll outside the walls, and there came upon a company of gypsies, with whom he had talk. Something in his demeanour must have made itself felt, for the mother of the family exclaimed, "Oh, it was kind of your honour to come to us here in the Sabbath evening in order that you might bring us God." The stranger was careful to make plain that he was neither priest nor minister, yet the woman and her daughters were urgent. "Oh, sir, do give us God; we need Him, sir, for we are sinful people. Give us God!" Those hands outstretched in the twilight asking for God show us what is deepest in our race when the evening shadows fall over the earthly scene.

Just now the world is so noisy, and we are so fascinated with the marvellous drama of its remaking, that we may easily ignore the deep inner springs of comfort and of power; and that is a peril both to the soul and the social order. Reforms are so swift, so radical, and so far-reaching that the Kingdom of Heaven seems at hand; but we shall have need of patience before it arrives. For all that is said of economic laws, and World Leagues, and social justice, it remains as true as ever that the foundations of a spiritual social order

are in the souls of men. Spiritual sanity and balance demand that we take time to cultivate the deeper, quieter life, if our social service is not to be fretful and disappointing. Blake was right when he wrote:

“Great things are done when men and mountains
meet;

This is not done by jostling in the street.”

Our hurry, our preoccupation, may be our defeat, if we do not make room for the quiet moment, and learn to listen to the murmur of those voices which will be audible when the noises of to-day have followed the feet that made them. “Be still, and know that I am God,” is an injunction the more valid because in our feverish hurry we may lose the far look which sees the meaning of the near-by task.

The religious life is not a thing apart, but it must have its times of apartness for withdrawal and renewal, and also its regular and disciplined habit. Without abating one jot or tittle our effort for a nobler social order, it behooves us to put our souls to school betimes to the masters of the spiritual life. Ten minutes a day, if no more, of quiet, of meditation over some page of heavenly literature will help us to “re-collect” ourselves, to use the great word of Plato, and thus redeem us from the

distracted life. Of Emerson it was said: "Where he was at all, he was altogether," and seldom has a more quiet and confident spirit moved amid the crass anxieties of the world. For lack of this "wise silence" our energies are divided, and we suffer loss alike in peace and power. When Dostoyefsky was sent to Siberia, at the gate of the prison-pen a woman gave him a little New Testament, and it became his bread, his meat, his friend. Living with that little book, sleeping with it under his pillow, reading it in the dawn when his fellows slept, thinking his way back into the Mind of Christ—by this means he not only saved his sanity but came out of "The House of the Dead," as he called it, a different and better man. One sometimes feels that if it has ever been given to any man to see God it was he.

The wise, it has been said, are they who have consented to receive the knowledge of themselves. Some courage is needed for a man to face his own soul, but we must get acquainted with ourselves and see what manner of beings we really are. About the time that Jesus was born in the manger a child was born in Cordova, in Spain, who was to be known to the world as Seneca. The more we know of Seneca the more clearly do we feel that he would have been among those of whom Jesus said, "They shall come from the east and from the

west, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God." That pagan saint was also a teacher of quietness and self-recollection, but he urges upon us the duty and necessity of an honest, fearless, and daily inspection of the house of the soul and its moral sanitation. It is no mawkish self-analysis that he recommends, but a kind of moral surgery and a measuring of our works and ways at the end of the day. Hear him:

"It is dangerous for a man too suddenly or too easily to believe in himself. Wherefore let us examine, watch, observe, and inspect our own hearts, for we are ourselves our own greatest flatterers. We should every night call ourselves to account. What infirmity have I mastered to-day? What passion opposed? What temptation resisted? . . . O the blessed sleep that follows such a diary! O the tranquillity, liberty, and greatness of that mind that is a spy upon itself and a private censor of its own manners!"

Not only do we need detachment for self-scrutiny and the reinforcement that comes of meditation and prayer, but we need also a more intimate fellowship than we now enjoy—the fellowship, I mean, not alone of public social worship, but of the little group, at once revealing and creative. The spiritual loneliness of the modern world is appalling. Hardly less so its reticence in respect of the

deeper experiences, as if we had suddenly been smitten mute concerning Divine things about which our fathers talked freely. "It is certain," says Novalis, "my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." If we could break through the hampering restraints of our timidity, our shyness of soul, and rediscover the uses of the group, it would mean much, both for instruction and inspiration. Most of the classics of the life of the spirit—such as "The Imitation of Christ"—were the fruits of community experience, not simply of individual quest and achievement. Something is needed to take the place of the fraternities of other ages, something adapted to the needs and conditions of our time, if we are to see clearly in these days when social action is intense and swift.

No busier worker ever walked the earth than Jesus during the days when He journeyed through Galilee and Judea, teaching, healing and blessing the multitudes. But diligent as He was, thronged by crowds of the curious, the critical and the needy, His life was never feverish, never flurried, never fretful. If sometimes He was too busy to take food, He kept inviolate His times of retirement, when, alone with His Father, He found strength and poise and patience for His tireless ministry. If we would follow Him we must go with Him into

the silent places, whence He emerged renewed and with the light of victory in His face and the note of power in His word.

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent for love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little grey leaves were kind to Him,
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him,
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content;
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew Him last,
When out of the woods He came.

XI

COMPANIONS OF THE HEART¹

SURELY at the opening of the year we need as much to take stock of our ideals as to lay plans for our work. The conviction is general and persistent that the preachers have lost their bearings, and that from their message the note of authority and the thrill of momentousness have died out. No doubt there are deep-seated and widespread causes for this absence of the power of appeal, and the abeyance of the instinct of evangelic persuasion. With these unfriendly influences we have not now to do, except to say that our first concern does not lie with those outside, but with our own hearts.

Our Christian pulpit has fallen, not upon evil days, but upon other days. The voices of the age call men away from the inner life; psychology seeks to dissolve it into mist and dream; and we are almost imperceptibly led to neglect it. To-day, even

¹ Essay read to a Ministerial Fraternal, in the City Temple, on a day of meditation and prayer.

more than when Emerson wrote, "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," and if—

Through the harsh noises of our day
A low, sweet prelude finds its way

—it is often hard to hear. Our life is obsessed by things external; our literature gives us little more than passing thoughts of things eternal. Science has unveiled the incredible vastness of the universe, and what we need now is to rediscover the still greater heights and depths and richness of the Kingdom of Heaven which is within.

Here lies the imperative necessity of the pulpit, if it is to recapture its lost power of insight and appeal. The prophet of to-day must learn to live where insight is pure and piercing, where moral earnestness rises into passion, and where the ancient oracle of God repeats its truth to the heart. He must look upon life with purified and exalted vision; his vision must become his utterance; and his utterance must be commended by the integrity of his life. No server of tables, no ornament of afternoon teas, no fellow of those strange sons of privilege who think earth a heaven, can meet this demand, much less a boon companion of that portion of the upper world whose ears are so stuffed with selfishness that they cannot hear the cry of those for whom civilization is often only exclusion

from the life proper to rational beings. No, we must live with people if we are to have any insight into social problems, and we must live with God if we are ever to solve them.

Evermore the minister must live in the innermost life of the spirit, where God makes character, and where souls renew their being in Him. In that sphere in which all higher living originates and from which it is guided and sustained, we must do our work. We must keep close to the poetry and piety of the Christian ages. It is our native air, and nowhere else can we breathe. Ours is the highest of all vocations, albeit often misunderstood and despised. Our great mission is to minister the living Word of the living God to living men, and our weapon is the influence born of the union of truth and sincerity. The rewards of our labours are in the things of mind and heart, with a thousand great and tender memories that keep forever alive faith and hope and love.

Hence my essay to-day on the Companions of the Heart—a tiny record of a few things learned from the great masters of the Inward Way who show me that with the minister, as with every other mortal, out of the heart are the issues of life. “Keep thine heart with all diligence” is the abiding word for each of us, and if we are to keep it pure and melodious we must give it into the keep-

ing of Him who made it. How significant are the words of Martineau on the literature that moved him most, and helped him to keep his heart in tune with things eternal: "In devotional literature and religious thought I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine, Tauler, and Pascal. And in the poetry of the Church it is the Latin or the German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley or of Keble, that fasten on my memory and heart, and make all else seem poor and cold." Surely here is the ultimate criticism, not only of the movement with which Martineau was identified, but of the Church of to-day. Why is the Church unable to produce such books in our age? Need we go any further to find out what is lacking and why we are bereft of power? Even so, we must go back to the men of the past, not because they lived in the past, but because they lived in the Eternal where a thousand years are as a day.

I

There remains, despite all changes and overturning, the one great timeless Book of the Presence, as fresh and rich to-day as ever it was in the past, revealing the fountain which sustains moral order and spiritual faith, and forever able to inspire the creative sense of a higher humanity moving to its own issues in the complex and tragic life of the

world. There are two ways at least in which we may read the Bible, with a historical or with a spiritual interest. The historian is concerned with the differences in it, even when he is aware of the unity underlying and overruling them, his attention being fixed, if he be a historian and not an iconoclast, on the sundry times and divers manners in which that unity is revealed.

Nevertheless, if it is our duty to listen to all that the historical study of the Bible has to say—and even to be a master of its methods—that is not the chief interest of the minister. It is where the historian ends that our real fellowship with that greatest and wisest of all written companions of the heart begins. When we have attained all that is to be won by any reflective or intellectual process exercised upon the results of historical study, the real greatness of the Bible remains to be explored. At its utmost the fiery discipline of Biblical criticism is only a purgatorial cleansing for another and higher vocation; at its best it can do nothing better than bring us in to the minster door. To his translation of Dante Longfellow prefixed a noble sonnet, in which, after comparing the *Divine Comedy* to a dim great cathedral at whose gate a labourer lays his burden while he enters to pray, he wrote what should be for us a daily habit of life with the Bible:

So as I enter here from day to day,
 And leave my burden at the minster gate,
 Kneeling to pray and not ashamed to pray,
 The tumult of the times disconsolate
 To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
 While the eternal ages watch and wait.

No matter what the Bible is talking about, it somehow always speaks with us, so that when we open it we may say with the Psalmist, "I will hear what the Lord will say unto me" (85: 5). This must have been what Coleridge meant when he said that the great thing about the Bible is, that "it finds us"—finds us under what cover soever of sophistry or subterfuge we may hide, or in whatever thick darkness of sorrow we may be lost; finds us with its strangely penetrating voice, now keen as a sword, now gentle as the caress of God. If a man will sit down, putting aside all theories, and let that wise old Book tell its story to his heart, it will do for him what it did for Erskine, and many another—make him aware that he is in the hands of One who is training him to be a good man. That is why the words and scenes of the Bible never grow gray with age, but

Always find us young,
 And always keep us so.

How wonderful it was during the war to read

the Bible, whose pages found new and profound exegesis in the teaching of events and in the tragedy of our own hearts. No other book seemed equal to such a time, alike in its depth, its sincerity, its strength, and the clarity of its vision; and when we reached the deep experiences we came near to those who, in the Bible, had walked among those deep things—and we were ready to take the guidance of men who in dark days found a way. Things turned against us. Hopes failed. Sorrow covered us like a cloud. Then it was that the great and simple words in which the men of old gathered up their final reasons for holding on in the battle of life, shone like stars. How they articulated the voice of immortality within us, and countervailed the melancholy oracle of Lucretius with their calm and confident assurances! If one may judge others by himself, our interest shifted to and fro between the Gospels and the Book of Job, perhaps because one expresses the highest faith and the other the deepest doubt. Troubled, tormented, torn between the warm faiths of the heart and the hard facts of life, we turned now to the words of Jesus, now to the wailings of Job, and found comfort in both. Indeed, the value of the Book of Job to troubled souls lies in its boldness, and the fact that it enables us to say the worst things about God which can enter the minds of good men in their hour of an-

guish—helps us to give vent to what else would be blasphemies, but are only cries of pain.

Uttering every mood of the heart of man, its shrill cry of pain, its deep sob of sorrow, yea, and its bitter doubt, the Bible is also the book of the Answerer which, if a man read, giving himself to its awful sense of the Unseen, its passion for purity, its vast pity and its vaster hope, will make him great of soul. Also, its great and simple words unfold hidden meanings as the years come and go, as if they were magic mirrors reflecting our keenest woe and our highest joy, and the most secret longings of our hearts. So that, returning to it after every inner healing and cleansing of soul, every enlarging of experience, every sin, every victory over the beast within us, we find in it our autobiography. What a companion of the heart—how relentlessly honest with us, how mercilessly searching, yet how divinely revealing and rich in comfort!

II

After the Bible, Martineau names the "Confessions of Augustine" as a great chapter in the literature of the heart; and with his verdict, Bernard, Theresa, and a multitude of others agree. Alexander Maclaren always took that book with him on his vacations, and his wonder grew with every re-reading. Indeed, it always makes me think of the

vision of Julian of Norwich when she saw the world as no larger than a hazel nut, and "the soul, as it were, an endless world" of immeasurable vastness and unfathomable depths—whereas, to-day, too often, the reverse seems to be true. We talk about the psychology of religious experience—often more about the psychology than the experience—but in Augustine we find the reality itself about which our professors talk so glibly.

Outside of the Bible there is no better analyzer of the subtle processes of spiritual experience, at least on its emotional and volitional side, than Augustine. Reading his Confessions is like holding a mirror up to our own hearts, and few have been able to do that without seeing that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked. There we see the push and pull of motives, the tug of passions, the ebb and flow of moral resolution, as if his bosom were made of glass. He was not always an accurate exegete; as little was he always a sound thinker. But he knew himself, and if we read him he will teach us to know ourselves, if so we may look into our own hearts and preach. How else can we know the human heart in these days when men are so strangely reticent about the highest things, save as we search our own souls and tell what we find there of the power of evil and the mercy of God?

What is more, Augustine will teach us deep and precious truths—chief among them that religion is a personal fellowship with a personal God. Who has portrayed more vividly the subtlety of sin, the paralysis of sensuality, the wonder of conversion, or the deep meaning of memory in the life of faith? His style, despite his use of antithesis and other devices, is an abiding wonder alike for its strength and its delicacy. In his great hours of lyric love of God, which was the grand element in his religion, it would be hard to name his equal. Some of his pages rival the Psalms, and the sweetness of that endless colloquy in prayer, which was an accompaniment of his thinking, may teach us not only to think prayerfully, but to pray in a manner worthy of Him who gives us audience. No man has ever summed up the Confessions in more perfect words than these:

I loved Thee late, dear Lord, I loved Thee late;
My years ran waste, but Thou didst love and wait;
Thou hast been very patient with my sin.

Thou wert within, dear Lord: I was without;
I sought Thee there, and round and round about:
I found Thee not because Thou wert within.

Thou wert with me, and I was not with Thee;
Thy beam shone on my path: I did not see;
Thy voice was loud, and yet I did not hear.

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I hungered and I thirsted after truth,
And ranged the world through all my faultful youth;
I sought Thee far, and Thou wert very near.

Stars for the sky, for heaven Thy glorious throne,
But us Thou madest for Thyself alone;
Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.

O late, so late! But all is overpast,
And peace is come, though late; Thy peace at last;
I am with Thee, and Thou, dear Lord, with me.

III

Then there is that golden little book of the Following of Christ, a treasure unto everlasting, the gift to the world of Thomas à Kempis. Even Renan loved it; Huxley kept it always on his desk, and Arnold found it a healing balm in a time of bitter sorrow. Quiet, deep, wise, winning, now piercing in its power of causing moral smart, now lucid with the final candour of sin laid bare, now tender with the pathos of life and the love of God—what may not one say about it? Lofty and aloof, at times it seems remote by the very depth of its vision, and some of its words are among the deepest ever uttered; as for example:

“Forsake yourself, and you shall find Me. I am often nearest to you when you think Me far away.

Oh, that I certainly knew!

What would'st thou do if this certain knowledge

were bestowed on thee? Do now what thou would'st do then, and rest secure."

Mixed with these profound flashes of vision is a rich fund of spiritual common sense. One can see à Kempis sitting on the old bench at the Deventer school—where Erasmus sat later—"in a little nook with a little book"; and his bright eyes saw everything. The keenness of his insight into divine things made the weaknesses and the vanities of human nature transparent, and if he set them down candidly he was always kindly. Perhaps a little catena will best exhibit the quality of his practical spiritual wisdom.

"If you fancy that you know many things and fairly understand them, remember that the things you do not know are many more than the things you know.

Learned men are apt to make a display of their learning, but I would rather feel compunction than to be able to define it.

The degree of virtue any one possesses is manifested in times of adversity. Trials do not cause human frailty; they serve to betray what a man really is.

He who seeks his own loses the things that are in common. The good man envies no one since he has no private joy.

Woe for us if we yearn for rest, as if peace and safety were with us, when as yet no true sign of holiness appears in our lives.

Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish, since you cannot make yourself as you wish. Thou thyself hast many failings which must be borne with by others.

Love never feels a burden, never thinks things tasks, willingly attempts what is above its strength, never argues that things are impossible."

Such a book, if read as it is arranged and was intended to be read, a few lines each day, is both food and medicine to the soul. If it has touches of monastic ascetism, and echoes of the piety of the cloister, these may not be amiss in an age so little used to austerity and so unacquainted with quiet. As a fact, the *Imitation* is a mosaic of Bible words and truths, wrought into a design by one who was an artist in holiness, and as such will last till all things mortal turn to dust. For à Kempis the way to God was the way of self-denial, of humility, of withdrawal from things less than the soul, which finds little echo in our indulgent and easy-going age; but when all is said, the oldest man in his ripe age has never found a wiser, truer way.

IV

Next to the *Imitation*, with me at least, comes that tiny little classic of *The Practice of the Presence of God*, by Nicolas Herman—better known as Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. Not a

man of letters, still less a great thinker, he was yet a master of the finest of all arts—the art of prayer. No one known to me ever fulfilled more absolutely the injunction to “pray without ceasing” until, at last, his life became a prayer incarnate. For thirty years a cook in a Carmelite kitchen, amidst the drudgery of his labours he carried a great stillness of heart, and every smallest act was done as if for God Himself. What sweetness of spirit, what simplicity of soul, what artless and unconscious sincerity of life!

Humility is perhaps the rarest of all virtues, hardest to capture, hardest to define. It is not self-abasement, for that imports a thought of self, and the humble man is so full of the good in others that he has no time to brood over himself. Nor is it modesty, since modesty is often concerned with pride. Perhaps we may say that it is the attitude of men toward God, as expressed in his attitude toward his fellows. If it stops with humility toward God alone, it is hardly humility at all. Tolstoy was aware of his distance from Heaven, but he was often impatient with his neighbours. Not so Nicolas Herman, whose simple, self-forgetting, unconscious humility is one of the finest flowers in Christian history. Hear some of his simple words:

“The world appears very little to a soul that con-

templates the greatness of God. My business is to remain in the presence of God.

Ah! did I know that my heart loved not God, I would immediately pluck it out. It is our whole work to love God, without being anxious about anything else.

Were God to put me in hell, I should not be anxiously concerned; for He would be with me, and His presence would be paradise. He will do with me what pleaseth Him.

In the way of God reflections or reasonings go for nothing; love does all. The chief business of the philosopher is prayer."

V

Still another Companion of the Heart, of rare and pure vision, albeit little known, is *Revelations of Divine Love*, by Julian of Norwich. As quaint in style as it is profound in thought, it comes to us from the days of Chaucer, of the Peasants' Rising in 1381, and the death of Wycliff. Of these things the book tells us nothing, yet it is as fresh and relevant to our time as if it were written yesterday. Its glowing love of God, its passion for the service of man, its eager, aspiring quest for union with the Eternal—these mark it as an everlasting book to be read and loved in every age. The truths of faith which many think are the trophies of our age are set forth in that book of a time long gone with an insight as sane as it is

radiant. Let me weave some of its words into a passage, if so it may tempt your heart:

"Truth seeth God, and wisdom beholdeth God, and of these two cometh the third; that is Love, which is God. God is all that is good, and the goodness that each thing has, it is He. . . . God is nearer to us than our own soul. He is the ground, He is the substance, He is the teaching, He is the teacher, He is the end and the meed for which every soul travaileth. Till I am *oned* with Him, I may never have full rest nor bliss. . . . Prayer uniteth the soul to God, as if He said: 'I am the ground of thy beseeching, I make thee to will it. How should it then be, that thou shouldest not have thy beseeching?' . . . All shall be well, all manner of things shall be well. For by the same blessed might, wisdom and love that He made all things to the same end our good Lord leadeth them continually, and thus to Himself shall bring it."

Ay, here is meat for the mind, hope for the heart, and light upon a dim path. Time fails me to tell of Theresa and her life of prayer, of Molines and his *Spiritual Guide*, of the great child-hearted Boehme whose *Letters* are mines of precious truth; of sweet St. Francis whose life of pity and joy is one of the gentlest memories of the world; of the *Theologia Germanica* so beloved by Luther; of Bunyan and his allegory of the Pilgrim of Faith; of the *Journal* of Woolman in which we learn of

that sanctuary of Silence where, morning and evening, he was refreshed by "descendings of heavenly dew"; of Bushnell who said, "I fell into the *habit* of talking with God, and do it now without knowing"; of others too many to name, whose words have brought courage, comradeship, and the joy of wise leadership. Waking early they ran ahead of us to the place of vision, and returned to show us the way, the truth, and the life. Their words linger in memory, like the strains of great music, so wise and true are they, yet so intimate withal that our own hearts seem to be speaking to us. Listen:

"Let a man learn to be at home in his own heart, and he will surely come to see what there is to do at home.

Every day bring God sacrifices and be the priest of this reasonable service, offering thy body and the virtue of thy soul.

We carry our cloister with us. Our body is the cell, and the soul is the hermit who dwells in it, there to pray to God and meditate.

Humble, meek, merciful, just and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death hath taken off the mask, they will know one another.

They who love beyond the world cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies.

Our faith cometh of the natural love of the soul, and by the clear light of reason, and of the steadfast mind which we have of God.

Were there anything nobler than sorrow, God would have redeemed man thereby. Sorrow is the dog of the Good Shepherd who guides the flock of man.

The heart has its reasons, which the reason does not know. This is faith: God felt in the heart.

He always prays who does good works, nor does he neglect prayer but when he leaves off to be just.

Nails would not have held God-and-Man fast to the cross, had not love held Him there.

Look that nothing live in thy working mind, but a naked intent stretching into God. Such a blind shot with the sharp dart of longing love may never fail of the mark. Oh, the little word of love!

Then only have we prayed when we can say: 'Another was just then with me.' In His will is our peace."

And listening, we learn whither these dear Companions of the Heart would lead us, even into the great confessional of the soul where we are alone with God, whence we emerge purged and endued with power for our ministry. Blessed be such guides who would conduct us thither where we seek to go, marking the path of the soul into that august and gracious Presence—to the sacrifice and cleansing in which no Church, no priest, can take part and where no human presence penetrates. There let us offer our prayer of silence and listening, receive forgiveness for our shuffling weakness, and our paltry excuses for falling from the high

level of thought and purpose and conduct demanded of us, and regain moral health and spiritual power.

So shall we become helpers of Christ in building that Kingdom of Heaven which cometh not by observation, but by faith, by thought, by deed, by just will and loving service—the Church of the Living God so built that beholders shall say, not “See what manner of stones are here,” but, “*See what manner of Men!*”

XII

"NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE"

"O that I knew where I might find Him."

—JOB 23: 3.

"He is not far from any one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being."—ACTS 17: 28.

"Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not."—GEN. 28: 16.

NO hymn, perhaps, has brought more strength, more courage, more consolation to weary human hearts than the familiar lines of "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Yet, strangely enough, this dear and haunting hymn was once deemed heretical, and had to make its way against many odds; but it is now triumphant everywhere. Even those who deal in crabbed dogmas could not long resist a hymn which utters a need so profound, an aspiration so universal. Softly, sweetly, surely, it won its way into the heart of humanity, like summer in a winter wood, and to-day the memory of its author has an altar-rail around it. How far this hymn has journeyed, what service it has rendered, only one of the great

Angels could record; but perhaps an incident will help us to realize its ministry.

When William McKinley, our noble and gentle President, was assassinated, it was arranged that at the hour his body was lowered into the tomb everything should stop everywhere, and the whole nation sing his favourite hymn. I was in Chicago, and it was a day I can never forget. All flags hung at half-mast, and suddenly, at two o'clock in the afternoon, a hush fell over the busy city. Everything stopped, trains, trams, taxis, teams; all shops closed, and the din of the streets fell silent. Indeed, they seemed more like the aisles of a great cathedral than the teeming thoroughfares of a metropolis. Multitudes stood in silence, with uncovered heads, and then, as if by common impulse, they knelt and sang the hymn of the President, their voices broken by sobs. The tones of that music beat like sea waves upon my heart, until it was almost broken; and everywhere the one hymn in which the sorrow of a nation found voice and solace was, "Nearer, my God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee."

For the history of this hymn we must go back to the dingy little chapel of the South Place Society in London. Turning the memorial volume of that Unitarian Church, two lovely faces look out upon us from its pages—Eliza and Sarah Flower, their

great, beautiful eyes framed in flowing ringlets. They were the daughters of the famous editor of the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, Benjamin Flower, who, for criticizing the Bishop of Llandaff in his paper, was sent to prison. While in prison he was visited by a lady of like faith, whom, on his release, he married. From such parentage, from such traditions came these two gifted sisters who were left, after the death of their father and mother, to the guardianship of their pastor, Charles Fox. They were noble, cultured, and refined, and their home at Dalston was a centre for musical and literary folk—Browning, then a boy-poet, being one of their friends. When Mendelssohn visited England he was a guest in their home, and recognized the genius of Eliza. Sarah had an enthusiasm for the stage, but, disappointed in her hope of being "The Actress," of whom she wrote in one of her prose sketches, became a hymn-writer. In 1834 she married Williams Adams, and rumour had it that John Stuart Mill sought the hand of her sister Eliza, whose frail, flower-like beauty bespoke an early end.

The two sisters, whose voices were mated like their souls, sang in the choir of the South Place Chapel, and more than once they set to music the harmonies of thought and feeling evoked by the spirit of their pastor. There, for that little chapel

choir, this great hymn was written, and for nearly a generation it had no other home—having been published, in the year after it was written, by Fox in his "Hymns and Anthems" in 1841. It seems almost incredible that a hymn now sung with such depth and fervour of feeling, and with such a sense of satisfaction by men of every creed, should ever have been barred from the worship of the Church on the ground that its theology, or lack of it, was bad. Yet such was the fact. Of course the objection was that it did not use the name of Christ, a complaint equally valid against the Lord's Prayer and St. Paul's Hymn of Love. Theological tinkers tried betimes to mend this "defect," changing some lines and adding others. Happily, their poor efforts are now lost in the rubbish-heap of things forgotten, and the final triumph of the hymn came when Lowell Mason wrote the Bethany tune for it. Beecher included it in his "Plymouth Collection" in 1855, and a song which came from the heart found its way to human hearts everywhere, lifting them on its wings nearer to God.

Sarah Flower wrote, besides her prose sketches, a poem in honour of the gentle martyr of Carthage, "Vivia Perpetua," which was no less a page from her own heart. It was a kind of hymn, albeit the music was subdued by an uncertainty of faith, as we learn from a letter to her pastor, in which she

confessed, in deep sorrow, that the Bible no longer spoke to her with its old authority. She was sorely troubled, and God seemed far off. Such a shadow waits for every one, or soon or late, who advances in the things of the spirit, since it seems to be a law that we must lose our faith in order to find it in its larger, deeper form—only, alas! some, not understanding this law, lose patience and do find a larger faith. For a "tender-minded" person there is hardly a keener form of suffering known on earth, as Romanes bore witness. We can bear much—anything, perhaps—if only our faith holds; but when that goes the way is dim. Never was Phillips Brooks wiser or nearer the need of the heart than in his essay on "Healthy Conditions of a Change of Faith," in which he marks the path along this difficult way. It is a stony place, as many can testify, but we must not let the hardness of it get into our hearts.

Such was the mood of heart, when she was a wanderer in quest of a larger faith, in which Sarah Flower wrote her hymn. She was a pilgrim in the lonely places of the soul, and her pastor did all that any one can do for another at such a time. After all, about all we can do for one another is just to love one another and be patient, sympathetic, and gentle. "Master, can all this be needed to find God?" asked Saint-Martin of his teacher

of the inward way. "We must even be content with what we have," was the wise and deep reply. Amid much that was dim our singer found, as Newman found, as Augustine found, one thing sure, yea, two things certain—God and the Soul! Life, with all its high adventure, is just our chance of knowing God, whom to know aright is life eternal. Those who miss Him find Him again; those who cry out in darkness come at last to the light—if not here, then out yonder in the City on the Hill. Eight years after she had written her hymn Sarah Flower died broken-hearted at the death of her sister, who passed away in 1846. But her song has in it a hint of a morn beyond our mornings, of something that awaits us better than our reasonings—better, even, than our dreams.

Like so many great hymns, "Nearer, My God, to Thee," is an exegesis in song and sorrow of a familiar Bible scene. Israel, in their long agony of travail, gave us a Book of Seers, and we have not yet gone beyond what they learned in their loneliness and vision. Living in dark times, they retired into themselves and gathered together their final reasons for holding on in the battle of life; and their great and simple words still bear the weight of our need. Our sweet singer found it so, seizing, as if by instinct, upon the scene most typical of the romance of God and the soul. What

an epitome of human nature was the life of Jacob! There we see the meanness of man and his majesty, his pettiness, and his power; man the fraud, the trickster, the cheat—and the dreamer. How contemptible he can be, how unjust, how sordid; yet is he redeemed by the dignity of a Divine dream—how wicked, yet how wonderful! Truly it is mysticism that saves us equally from cynicism and doubt; and our poet found that the Bible tells the whole truth about man, his littleness and his greatness—found that it knew her better than she knew herself.

Two old and profound questions are raised by this hymn, and if we may not say that the singer solved them, she at least pondered them reverently. The first is the mystery of the Divine elusiveness. Manifestly, the God of the Bible is nowhere unless He be everywhere. Why, then, we ask, in bewilderment, if God be everywhere, if in Him we live and move and have our being, does He seem so far off? What is the meaning of this strange withdrawal of God, whereby we are left to grope our way over stony places, our bed a stone? There must be a deep and wise reason for it, else it would not be so. Is it a real withdrawal or only seeming? Does His hiding from us mean, as Pascal said, that we would not seek Him if we had not already found Him, and by seeking Him we find

ourselves, find what life is, what it means, and what it is worth? Withdrawing and yet abiding, does He mean to teach us that we cannot live without Him, and cannot live with Him unless we live godlike lives? Is it expedient that He go away, if so that He may thereby come closer to us, just as our friends, when they die seem lost a while, but, later, steal softly into our hearts, nearer than they were before?

All the great relationships of life depend for their beauty and vitality upon a rhythm of nearness and distance, of intimacy and aloofness, of approach and withdrawal. The sky, for example, is as near as it is far. It seems aloft, far away, arching over our fleeting life, yet it really begins at the top of the ground. We live in it. We breathe it. Always its soft pressure is upon us. It is so in human fellowships, and to forget that fact is to trample upon the holiest things of life. Between husband and wife, between father and son, there is this rhythm of familiarity and formality, of devotion and restraint, of sweetness and severity, by which the relationship is kept sweet. Friendship lives in the same delicate law. God is with us, within us, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet"; but our eyes are holden, that we may walk by faith, not by sight. If we indeed saw God as He is, if the awful reality of His nearness

were unveiled, our doubts would vanish, but our discipline would end as well. The victory of faith, the patience of hope, and the sacrifice of love would have neither meaning nor value—and it is by these things that the soul is trained. So, even in the blindness which is our only wisdom, we can see that our highest beatitude here must needs be the joy of those who have not seen and yet have believed, those who by struggle have been made strong.

Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to Thee.

Socrates, and after him a whole race of seers, held that Divine truth is dim and dream-like only because we are not awake. Our birth is indeed "a sleep and a forgetting," and not many ever really wake up in this life. Hence the awful sense of unreality that torments us, making the trial and adventure of faith, which must trust the vague, dissolving dreams of the soul as against the brute facts of the world. Yet our highest wisdom lies in our angel-mindedness, and not in our smart cleverness, as the life of Jacob shows us. He believed in his dream, built an altar to it, made a vow of loyalty, and God kept the vow. After twenty years, as he returned that way, the angels met him not in a dream, but in the open light on the common

road. Rachel died. Joseph was reported "missing." Famine visited him. Old age came on with many infirmities. Yet, through it all, the vow held, and slowly the vision fulfilled itself in his experience, so that, when he died, the dream was still there and nothing had passed but his sleep.

The other question is darker and far more difficult, yet one has the feeling that the singer came nearer solving it than she did the first. Indeed, no one may ever hope to come nearer the meaning of that shadowy mystery than Sarah Flower did in those lines which so many choke in trying to sing:

All that Thou sendest me
In mercy given.

In mercy! Is it a merciful thing that man should be a wanderer on the earth, suffering woe, weariness, wretchedness, his pillow a stone? Why is life so hard? Why should the way lead through the stony place, amid griefs unspeakable, and with so many graves along the roadside? Could not the path have been made easier? Yes, if it was intended that man should live as a fat ox, knee-deep in rich grass, with nothing to do but eat and sleep. But what if the purpose of God be something else, something higher? What if the purpose of life, considered deeply, be to open our eyes to what life is, set us dreaming of God, and grow

a noble and valiant soul? If that be so, it would be no mercy to leave us untroubled, lest we pass our days and never live at all!

Our greatest hope in life, said Tagore, is that suffering is there; it has "driven man with his prayer to knock at the gate of the infinite in him, the divine, thus revealing his deepest instinct, his unreasoning faith in the reality of the ideal—the faith shown in the readiness for death, in the renunciation of all that belongs to the self."¹ With which agrees the insight of the Bible, whose seers discovered that dark and dire tragedy, if bravely met, softens our nature and attunes it to melodies not heard before. How often in the Bible we hear some one saying that he is a much better man now that God has plunged him into the deep waters of sorrow than he used to be when he had no troubles. They even go so far as to say that God did well when He let loose woes upon them: that He knew them better than they knew themselves. When they recall the things that used to vex them and fill them with envy they have no words to express their joy at being set free from poverty and paltriness of spirit. They confirm our own experience that, while pleasures leave only faint traces on the surface of the soul, our conflicts, our crises, our storm and stress teach us the truth that is life. Hence

¹ "Personality," Chapter III. The Second Birth.

the lesson learned by living—that we can never find or receive the greatest truths until sorrow has softened us and made us tender and humble of heart. No fact is more certain, and in that fact we find the reason, so far as we can know it, for the hardness of life.

Take two examples, one from fact, one from fiction, but both equally true; the first from the life of Charlotte Brontë. What a remarkable family lived in the Haworth parsonage, facing the grey cemetery and the wind-swept moor, the father as glum and gloomy as Dean Swift, the daughters—two of them—dowered with great genius, the son a moral wreck. One knows not which was the greater, Emily or Charlotte—Emily, whose secret few have divined, and who was never so much at home as when on the moor with its magic of wild earth and wild sky, its granite grey as time; the moor when brushed by lavender twilights or transfigured by sunset fires. Yet sorrow followed fast and followed faster. Branwell died of drink, and the decay of his health and mind was horrible to see. Emily faded, and, though denying that she was ill, went away, taking her secret with her. Annie followed shortly, leaving Charlotte alone with her father, who, never easy to live with, became more difficult as sorrow was added to sorrow. Hear her thoughts:

"Take the matter as you find it. Ask no questions. You expected bread, and you have got a stone. Break your teeth on it. Do not doubt that the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation. Close your fingers firmly over the gift; let it sting through the palms. Never mind. In time, after your hand and arm have swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die. If you survive the test, you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive."

There must have been a gritty dryness behind her burning eyes when she wrote those stern, stoic words, half defiant in their hardness. Let us not chide her—God forbid!—she was a brave little woman: all of us talk wisely until our own hearts are broken. Yet there is a wiser way than hers, and happy is he who finds it. It is hinted to us by Maarten Maartens in his story of "Herman Pols," a book of real power and depth, letting light into some of the darkest corners of life. There is a sermon in the book, reminding one of those searching sermons scattered through the stories of Mark Rutherford, one passage of which lingers in memory. The text is, "If he ask for bread, will he give him a stone?" and the answer reads like a page from the life of the writer—a page blotted with tears. Listen:

"Still bread," cried the preacher, "though ye deem it a stone in the giving! Still bread, though it bruise

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your hands and though it break your teeth! Bread of life, for ye asked, and the Father hath given it! Bread of life, in the end, whatsoever it may seem to you now, in the eating! Still bread, not a stone! Do you dare to take this thing that the Father hath sent you, this trouble, this bereavement, this unbearable affliction—do you dare, you poor mortal, to spread it out in God's presence—to say, 'Father, I asked Thee! I asked Thee! Thou hast given me a stone'! Do you dare?"

No; if it is the will of God that we eat stony bread, let us partake of the Sacrament of Sorrow with humble hearts; and if we cannot be grateful for all things, we can be grateful *in* all things. Jacob took "the stones of that place" and made an altar of prayer; our singer turned them into a song. It is not easy to do, as God knows, but it is the best and wisest way. They are to be accounted as having fulfilled the purpose of life who in this great matter have not failed—they only have lived. Some days ago a man sent me a letter from somewhere in Wales, telling of a sermon which he heard Joseph Parker preach in the City Temple in the mid-'seventies, and he remembers it yet. The question of the sermon was, "Does God Forsake the Righteous?" and in the course of it the preacher described the abode of a poor widow. He spoke of it as "a place out of which even a sheriff's officer could not take more than a shadow,

and would not take that because he could not sell it.” There was a figure to stick in the memory. Later the preacher said: “I have been as nearly forsaken as any man in the world. I looked around on all sides, but could see no way out—no lateral way, *only a vertical one!*” What a phrase!

Often it is so in the strange vicissitudes of life—the only way out is up; and when the angel within us ascends the ladder of faith it is met by the Angels of God descending with blessing. Then, and then only, does the place of sorrow become a place of vision, and the pillow of pain a pillar in the house of God. Our singer rose above her doubt, her dismay, and it is, therefore, that the hymn closes with the whirr of wings cleaving the sky, lifting her from the shadowed earth to the shadowless heavens; happy wings homeward bound, like the doves at the prophet’s window.

Thou Life within my life, than self more near.
Thou veiled Presence, infinitely clear,
From all elusive shows of sense I flee,
To find my centre and my rest in Thee.

XIII

THOSE GONE BEFORE

"That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!'"—JOHN 21:7.

THERE is about this narrative an air of naturalness which sets it apart from other such accounts. It has a restraint, a dignity, a delicacy, and, withal, a vividness of human detail which give it every mark of authenticity. Its human colour and its awful yet tender disclosure blend as naturally as earth and sky on the horizon. No imagined account known to me gives anything like the same impression of validity in beauty. Always it is so in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, in which the unseen mingles naturally, softly, benignly with our mortal life, now like a gentle air touching our temples, now as imperceptible as ether. One has only to read some of the apocryphal records to see the difference in attitude, as well as in style.

After a night of fruitless labour the disciples

descried a Figure walking on the shore in the morning light. At first, be it noted, they did not know Him. That is an eloquent fact, suggestive of many things, and just what might have been expected in such an event. It is often so with us here. Friends return after years of absence so greatly altered that we look at them for a time with unrecalling eyes. Gradually, after a while, they are disclosed. Some peculiarity of gesture or manner, some tone of voice, some familiar expression, and we see the old face in the new. At Emmaus the disciples recognized Jesus in the familiar act of breaking bread. Note, also, on the lake at dawn, that it was the man nearest to Him in natural affection and spiritual affinity—that disciple whom Jesus loved—who knew Him first. It was John, the seer, who gave vision to Peter, the man of action. So it is always; but the suggestion here is very significant of the power of love to penetrate the disguises of life and death. Ulysses returned after his wanderings and was unrecognized, save by his dog Argus, and, later, by his old nurse. Had his mother been present, no doubt she would have known the bronzed and bearded figure at the door.

Often is it life, not death, that changes us past love and knowledge. Dickens has a story of an old woman, withered and infirm, sitting by the

grave of her lover, talking with a child who finds her there. The child eyes her curiously as she tells her tale of love, and asks, timidly, if her lover was an old man. The woman draws from her bosom a worn locket and turns to the child the picture of the young man, radiant in all the first glow of youth, and facing him a maiden of eighteen, fair as a summer day. "There we are, dear," she said softly; "would you take that smiling girl for the old woman at your side?" When the tell-tale eyes of the child answer, she murmurs, bitterly, "No, no; there is no trace of the girl he loved left in me. If he saw me at the grave he would never know me. And he is young as ever." Yet her love was still young, and if she had thought of it more deeply perhaps she would have learned a deeper truth. For we are spirits now as much as we shall ever be, spirits clad in veils; and it is the spirit of our friend that we love. Often we do not really know a friend until we see him in the apocalypse of death, as Tennyson saw Hallam as one transfigured and exalted. It is permitted us to take this familiar fact as a parable, if not as a prophecy, of what will be true when death has removed the masks which hide us one from another.

The testimony of the Bible in regard to the hope of recognition in the life beyond is most impressive, and a little puzzling at first. It is confident,

but not curious, and its reticence is very eloquent. If we except a few intimations, such as the Transfiguration scene and the words of the Master to the man who died with Him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," the writers of the Bible have hardly a word, hardly a thought, to bestow upon the subject. It is almost the same in Christian literature, in which the direct references to this haunting hope are surprisingly meagre.¹ Why should it be so? Is it because the writers of the Bible did not believe that we shall meet and know our friends again? No, no; apparently it is rather because it never occurred to them that any one would doubt it. In the New Testament at least it is everywhere taken for granted, as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where it is assumed as an obvious fact. The whole tendency of its teaching so clearly implies that we shall know and be known that there is no need to affirm it.

¹ "Reunion in Eternity," by Sir Robertson Nicoll. Here is a golden book, and it was sorely needed. It begins with a series of essays on reunion, tender, wise, exquisitely restrained, yet serenely confident, tracing the great hope in the poetry of Tennyson and Dante, and in the teaching of Luther and Melancthon. Then follows an anthology of reunion, as between parents and children, brothers and sisters, lovers, husband and wife, and friends, to which is added a far-ranging testimony from history and literature. It is a book for the bereaved, bringing to the solace of wounded hearts the music of many voices, wooing us from the bitterness of grief to the peace of believing, the waiting in hope. It will be a ministry of grace to hearts deeply hurt by the horror of war.

Jesus taught the continuity of life here and hereafter, and that we begin there where we leave off here. Death, in His thought, is no such break as it seems to be. It does not destroy the soul, nor does it denude it, making the after-life a pale shadow of our life here, as the old Greeks feared. The change which takes place in death is only in the scene of life and in its conditions, not in its reality and unity. Indeed, the eternal life may be entered into now, death being only a sleep from which we awake to a fuller life, free of the fatigues of earth. As St. Paul puts it, death is abolished. If we are nowhere told that families will be grouped there as they are here, we are told that God is our Father and we are His family. Always it is to a richer, more abundant life that we go, where truth will be more vivid and love more real. Now we see through a glass darkly; then face to face. Life is to be better further on, fuller in its fellowships, happier in its realizations, more home-like even than it is now. It will surprise us, fulfilling our most daring hopes and our holiest dreams—such is the witness of the Bible.

Let us go further, and ask as to the basis of this hope that opens so fair a vista. In respect to the after-life, as of the life that now is, faith is the first necessity and the last. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as demonstration in this

dim world. We do not live by knowledge, but by faith, and faith, as George MacDonald tells us, is not yielding; it is a force. Huxley dared to trust his moral instincts as over against a natural order which he held to be non-moral; that was faith. The highest faiths and hopes of humanity are not only more revealing, but they are more trustworthy than our knowledge. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away, but now abideth the ancient, high, heroic faith of man. It is no other than the voice of the universe speaking in him, telling him what the world is and what he is. Once we grasp this fact, the truths of life and faith take on a new aspect of validity. The universe which bred these hopes in us and causes them to persist, does not create desires to which there is no answer. Born out of the heart of nature, our faiths and dreams are a part of the account and prophecy which the universe gives of itself; a response to something real which evokes and sustains them. How vividly Ian MacLaren stated this in one of his Drumtochty stories. Margaret Howe, who was "nearer to the heart of things than any one in the glen," said to gentle Lily Grant, "Dinna be ashamed of yir dreams, Lily; they'll come true some day, for ye canna think better than God will dae."

The most wonderful thing on this earth is per-

sonal love. However it may be analyzed, it is a fundamental reality, and its prophecy has a right to be heard. Never is it more glorious than when it confronts its old enemy death. There is a scene in the Zangwill drama, "The Next Religion," which may help us to see the wonder and prophecy of a love that is stronger than death. Stephen Trame is a teacher of the religion of law, a gospel of science whose glacial truths, he holds, will breed a sturdier faith than the old tropical theology. His wife does not share his arctic religion, with its far-off frozen God, which brushes the hope of personal immortality aside as a mere sentiment. Through the generosity of a disciple, a temple is built with coloured windows, in which Mazzini, Emerson, and Swinburne appear like saints. The son, Wilfred, has written the music for the dedication, seeking to capture the melody of the old faith and set it to alien words. Just before the service of dedication begins, the son is brutally killed by a fanatic in the vestibule, and his body lies on the floor covered with flowers from the altar. On one side stands his father with his cold religion of law; on the other his mother, white and magnificent in her faith in the religion of love. Stephen, seeking to console her, says, "But he is not dead, Mary; he will live in his music and his ——"

"Stop your words," cries the mother. "Can I

embrace his music and feel its heart beating against mine? Will it give me kiss for kiss? There must be people of all ages in heaven. Yes, that is why children die—that heaven may not lack little ones and so be less heaven. Is there not time enough and space enough and power enough to set all these blunders straight? Are there not stars enough, universes enough? Or do you think I cannot wait a million years and journey a million miles if only to hear Wilfred once more say, ‘Mother’? I tell you that the great live world will never take your religion, and that even if you delude all male humanity the mothers would rise up and tear it to pieces.”

There speaks a voice from the heart of life itself, the mother voice of the world, more eloquent and more authentic than any logic. It comes from the depths, fathomless by reason, and it rises to the heights. It proclaims the enduring reality of love between mother and son to the end of things. When love and death face each other we are among the elemental realities of life where religion has its roots, and philosophy its foundations. Fidelity here is sanity. Our human world, with its light and colour, its warmth of love, its sanctity of friendship, its fondness of comradeship, is the fairest flower of the universe in time, and it has enduring value. It is the nursery of love, beauty, char-

acter, and hope. At bottom it is a question of values, and human life has value for God. He made it. He loves it. He conserves it. Man is at his highest in fellowship, and the loves of life, which make him most like God, are prophetic beyond words. Brief at its longest, broken at its best, in jeopardy every hour amid the perils of earthly life, love affirms and claims its own promise. Every argument for a life beyond is also an argument for the reunion of those who walked together here and in the light of love learned a faith which defies death.

Our real difficulty lies, perhaps, in the fact that we are unable to imagine the conditions of the life beyond, the less so in these days when so much of the old scenery of faith has faded. Try as we may, we cannot picture another world as it is, save as a glorified vision of the world that now is—life without weariness, love without sorrow, amid the living green of rustling woods and the glint of happy waters. But that need be no difficulty at all. If we had no experience of a world like this we should probably regard the very idea of such a world as contradictory, if not inconceivable. Nor must we make our imagination the measure of the love and power of God. For my part, the vision of God in Christ is enough, and the assurance grows that the reality it has in its keeping will sur-

pass the dreams we all have dreamed, when we awake from the dream of life. Hitherto a fine instinct has kept Christian thinkers from being too intrusive about the life beyond the veil, willing to walk by faith and not by sight, knowing that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has in store for those who seek His will to do it.

St. Bernard, in his lament over his brother, refused to think that the dead simply remember the past and know not the present in which we struggle. He held, as Tennyson held—what every sorrowing heart may learn if it is patient and true—that those who leave us do return in a new intimacy that is both inward and healing—nearer, it may be, than when they walked by our side—influencing us in ways beyond words; and that our sense of fellowship with them often rises, in moods dross-drained and holy, beyond anything that life can supply. But for many in our day this communion of memory, of ideal, of aspiration, is not enough: it is too vague, too impersonal. Never has there been a deeper yearning in human hearts than to-day for the touch of vanished hands and the sound of voices that are hushed. Millions of young men have fallen in the war—the gay, the gallant, the true-hearted, the echo of whose laughter is still in

our ears—doubly dead because they died so young, and a great heartache follows the evening sun around the world. It is profound. It is pathetic. There are hours, there are days, when it is poignant almost beyond human endurance.

What wonder, then, that many seek not only communion, but communication, with the dead. There are those who tell us that they have been granted disclosures of a kind that seem to be authentic, and as to that I make no question—only, the majority have not been so blessed. Should God grant me such an unveiling, I would thank Him with that dumb joy for which words were never made; but He has not done so. Nor can I bring myself to seek it through others, much less by the methods employed which are so open to doubt and which make a man discredit his own senses. No, no, Spiritualism is not spirituality, and it is in the fellowship of the Spirit of Christ, in whom there is no darkness, no distance, no death, that I find consolation and consecration. What we want is not simply the bare fact of survival, but something that reveals itself in a finer grace of character and shows itself to be true in the exaltation and amelioration of life. Winifred Letts has set the key by which we may be as heroic in our loneliness as our heroes were in their sacrifice:

Because you live, though out of sight and reach,
I will, so help me God, live bravely too,
Taking the road with laughter and gay speech,
Alert, intent to give life all its due.

One word more. If we keep alive through long years of separation our love of those gone before, as every true heart does, then, on our side at least, reunion is prepared for. And we may be sure that they will answer our longing, for love is the sovereign reality, the same here, hereafter, and forever—a mighty power overleaping time and change and distance. Like the disciples of Jesus on the lake at dawn, we may not know them at first when we meet again, but there will be tokens—dear, delightful, well-remembered things, all the more vivid in that clearer light—to tell us that “life is ever lord of death, and love can never lose its own.” So let us believe; so let us live out our little day

Till the night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost a while.

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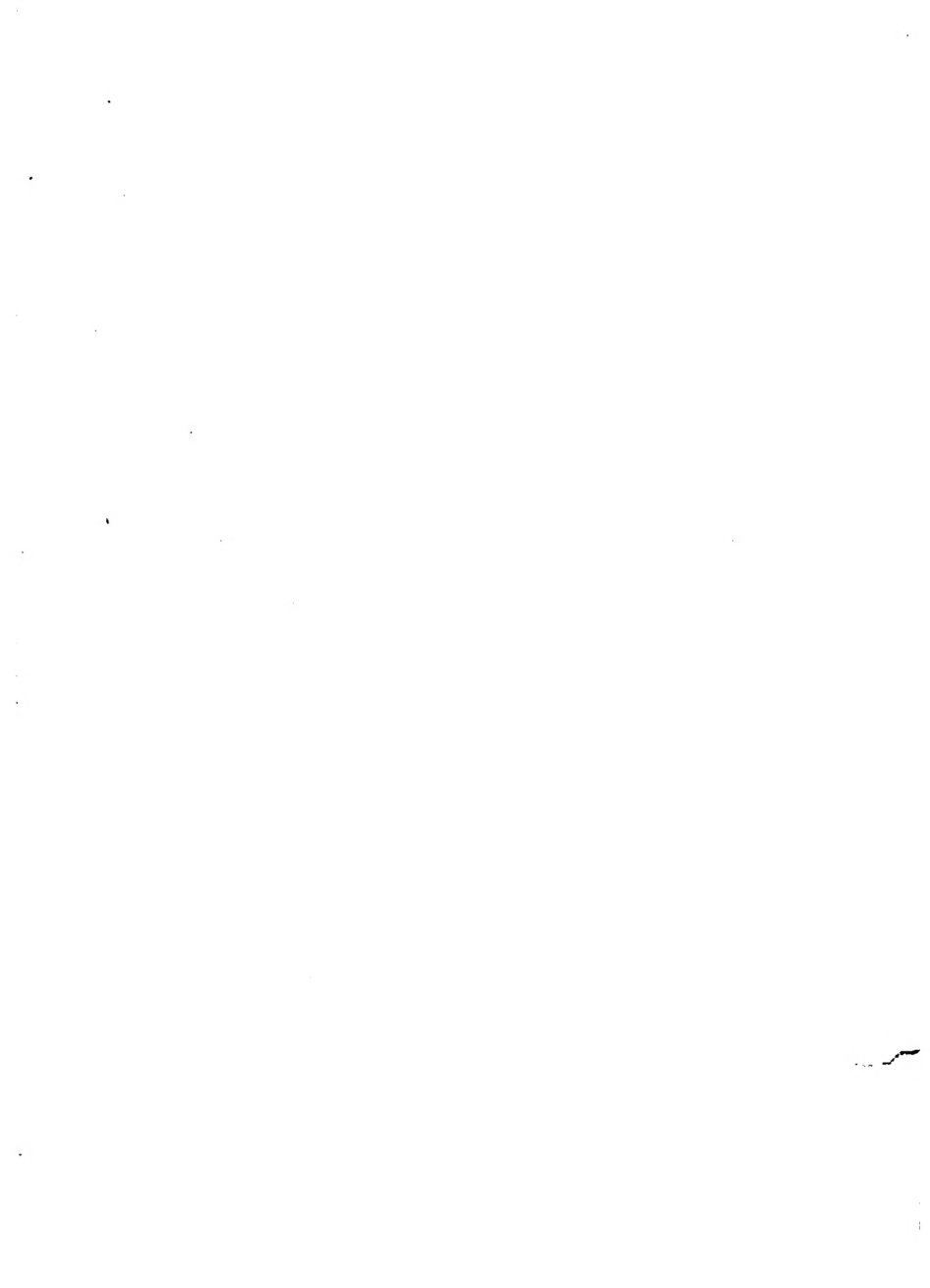
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